# "Impact of the anti-consumption lifestyle on brand attitudes via green advertising: The moderating effect of message types"

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# IMPACT OF THE ANTI-CONSUMPTION LIFESTYLE ON BRAND ATTITUDES VIA GREEN ADVERTISING: THE MODERATING EFFECT OF MESSAGE TYPES

#### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine how anti-consumption lifestyles affect the brand attitude through the benefits (utilitarian environmental and warm glow) of green advertising. It has been confirmed that the message types used in the advertising can influence the evaluation of brand attitudes, depending on whether the focus is on promotion or prevention. Respondents were gathered from 265 South Korean consumers. The survey data were regressed and the research hypothesis was verified using the Process Model. As a result, the anti-consumption lifestyle positively affects the brand attitude of green advertising through warm glow (βindirect = .073) and utilitarian environmental benefit ( $\beta$ indirect = .217). These results revealed that the anti-consumption lifestyle can influence brand attitude through warm glow and utilitarian environmental benefit. In particular, when the moderating effect of message types is verified, the warm glow can have a more positive effect on brand attitudes through a promotion-focused message ( $\beta$  = .1559, p = .05), and the utilitarian environmental benefit can have a more positive effect on brand attitudes through a prevention-focused message ( $\beta = -.226$ , p = .024). In conclusion, this study can provide insight into the lifestyle of target customers of eco-friendly advertisements and message types used in advertisements.

**Keywords** anti-consumption, utilitarian benefit, warm glow, green

marketing, regulatory fit, South Korea

JEL Classification M31, M37, Q54

#### INTRODUCTION

Recently, when environmental issues such as climate change have emerged around the world, consumers are increasingly interested in eco-friendly factors when purchasing and using products (Whitmarsh & O'Neill, 2010). To reinforce consumers' green purchasing behavior, basic perceptions related to consumption or lifestyle changes will be required. One such trend is environmentally oriented anti-consumption (EOA). This is an activity against consumption itself for the purpose of protecting the environment (García-de-Frutos et al., 2018). Therefore, finding out how environmentally friendly anti-consumption lifestyles can affect consumer perceptions of green products or brands could make a difference in recent green consumption research. Furthermore, identifying the behavioral mechanisms that have an impact could be helpful in suggesting ways to elaborately induce green consumption.

Particularly, it will be meaningful to verify how green marketing carried out in business practice is affected by the anti-consumption lifestyle. As the concern about environmental sustainability becomes increasingly important across various business, companies have realized the need for effective environmental marketing strategies and thus have started to consider how to do effective green advertising (Global Industry Analysis Report, 2012).

This study, in which consumers with anti-consumption lifestyles evaluate green product advertisements, wants to examine their perception of warm glow and utilitarian environmental benefits in terms of emotional and utilitarian benefits. So far, research on anti-consumption has been dealt with as ante-cedents of anti-consumption, such as environmental concern, the effect of social interest (Barnett et al., 2005; Sudbury-Riley & Kohlbacher, 2018), or the effect of anti-consumption lifestyle (Kropfeld et al., 2018; Nepomuceno & Laroche 2017) on green consumption or sustainable consumption in macroscopic terms. On the other hand, research on how environmentally oriented anti-consumption lifestyles can influence consumers' green behavior in actual business practice is lacking. In other words, research on the environmental meaning of anti-consumption lifestyle has been steadily progressing, but further research on how anti-consumption affects brand attitude in actual marketing practice needs to be conducted. Based on existing research, it can be predicted that environmentally oriented anti-consumption can have a positive effect on the purchase of eco-friendly advertising products, but this study would like to examine in detail what mechanism it goes through in the process using empirical research. Therefore, this study will examine how consumers with anti-consumption lifestyles form positive attitudes toward marketing communication for green products.

#### 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Anti-consumption refers to "against consumption" as the opposite of consumption (García-de-Frutos et al., 2018; Chatzidakis & Lee, 2013; Cherrier et al., 2011). According to several researchers, anti-consumption may be an action against general consumption and against a specific purpose or object (e.g products/brands, companies, or nations) (Chatzidakis & Lee, 2013; Iyer & Muncy, 2009; Lee et al., 2009). Iyer and Muncy (2009) suggested that anti-consumption appears for specific products or consumption as a means to achieve social and personal goals.

Consumers can practice anti-consumption for various purposes. García-de-Frutos et al. (2018) called environmentally oriented anti-consumption (EOA) actions against consumption in order to protect the environment. Environmentally oriented anti-consumption can consist of reduction, avoidance, or rejection of consumption (Chatzidakis & Lee, 2013). Kropfeld et al. (2018) suggested that environmentally oriented anti-consumption can contribute significantly to lowering the environmental footprint than other lifestyles. In addition, Black and Cherrier (2010) said that anti-consumption can serve as an innovative motive for sustainable development, and Lee et al. (2009) said that anti-consumption goes beyond simply

refusing to purchase products or brands, and that anti-consumption constitutes a sustainable lifestyle. Research on ethical consumption argued that anti-consumption can be conceptualized in terms of self-interested motivations and socio-environmental concerns (Barnett et al., 2005). Peyer et al. (2017) said that among anti-consumption lifestyle consumers, voluntary simplifiers have a high propensity to purchase green products and have shown a positive attitude toward sustainable economy with high interest in the environment. Anti-consumerist practices pursuing voluntary simplicity act as a motive for consumer behavior (Peyer et al., 2017), and these anti-consumers lead to value-based consumption based on environmental concerns (Lee & Ahn, 2016). Although an anti-consumption lifestyle does not necessarily mean eco-friendly consumption (Black & Cherrier, 2010), consumers who have embraced an anti-consumption lifestyle can use eco-friendly products or buy the brand. According to Garciade-Frutos et al. (2018), environmentally oriented anti-consumption can act as an important means for driving change towards an eco-friendly lifestyle and sustainable products. When the contents of these various anti-consumption-related studies are summarized, it can be expected that the anti-consumption lifestyle can have a positive relationship with the consumer's brand attitude in terms of the environment.

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Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibáñez (2006) stated that utilitarian environmental benefit and emotional environmental benefit (e.g warm glow giving) are prerequisites for the perception of green products. Lin et al. (2017) described utilitarian environmental benefits and warm glow benefits as green values, and argued that this has an important effect on the green product value. That is, it can be expected that the anti-consumption lifestyle can positively influence the green brand attitude through consumers' perception of green value. In this study, it is expected that the anti-consumption lifestyle can have a positive relationship between utilitarian value and emotional value in green advertising. On the basis of the above discussion about anti-consumption, the hypothesis on the relationship between anti-consumption and consumer's value perception in green advertising is formulated.

Consuming products with environmentally friendly components can provide additional benefits to consumers compared to consuming regular products (Roberts, 1996). Among the psychological and utilitarian benefits for eco-friendly behavior, pursuing functional benefits can be called utilitarian environmental benefits (Schmuck et al., 2018b). These functional benefits come from the brand's or product's ability to achieve practical or physical environmental performance (Sheth et al., 1991). Environmentally utilitarian benefits perceived by consumers may be related to brand attitudes in green advertising. This is because the recognition of practical value in eco-friendly marketing can positively influence the purchase of eco-friendly products. Many studies have been revealed that consumer's perceived utility value has a positive correlation with product or brand performance (Baker et al., 2002; Grewal et al., 1998; Sirohi et al., 1998). According to Hartmann and Apaolaza-Ibanez (2012), providing information about eco-friendly product attributes in advertisements can lead to positive perceptions of the brand, strengthen brand attitudes, and increase purchase intentions. Schmuck et al. (2018a) also stated that utilitarian environmental benefit from green advertising positively influences consumers' purchase intention. Based on these studies, the author inferred that in green advertising, consumers can form a positive brand attitude when they perceive the environmentally utilitarian value of the brand.

Altruistic value can be said to be a sustainability

perspective that emerges from social movements such as anti-consumption (Nepomuceno et al., 2017). Schwartz and Howard (1984) defined altruistic value as a value derived from an individual's motivation to contribute to the well-being of society as a whole or others. In particular, altruistic values can act as antecedents of eco-friendly behavior (Bamberg, 2003; Berenguer, 2007). However, some scholars have questioned the purity of altruism (Batson, 1987; Cialdini et al., 1997; Griskevicius et al., 2010), and as an alternative, warm glow, an egoistic motivation for environmentally friendly and prosocial behavior, has been proposed (Kahneman & Knetsch, 1992).

Isen (1970) once referred to the positive emotional state experienced in helping others as "warm glow". This warm glow effect has been supported in many studies. Experiencing a warm glow feeling can increase charitable behavior (Levin & Isen, 1975) and can promote blood donations (Allen et al. 1992). Duclos and Barasch (2014) found that the warm glow effect had a significant impact on prosocial behavior. Based on this concept, this study intends to define a warm glow as a positive emotional state felt by contributing to eco-friendly activities. Warm glow can be said to be a positive affective response, meaning happy, pleased, and satisfied (Kahneman & Knetsch, 1992; Roseman, 1991). In other words, warm glow refers to emotional perception such as happiness and satisfaction that consumers contribute to the environment when they are exposed to green advertising in this study.

Kahneman and Knetsch (1992) have used the warm glow theory to explain their intention to contribute to environmental protection. They said that monetary donations for environmental protection were the intention to pay for moral satisfaction of environmental improvement. It has been supported in various studies that the warm glow effect has a positive impact on eco-friendly behavior (Nunes & Schokkaert, 2003; Ek & Soderholm, 2008; Hartmann et al., 2017). Wüstenhagen and Bilharz (2006) revealed through empirical research that consumers buy green energy at a premium price not to protect the environment itself, but to feel better about themselves. In addition, Hartmann et al. (2017) suggested that the expectation of warm glow can have a positive effect on the attitude of eco-friendly products. Based on these studies, the

author deduced that in green advertising, consumers' perception of warm glow in the emotional aspect can have a positive effect on brand attitude.

Green advertising contains a message that appeals to the needs and desires of consumers who are concerned about the environment (Zinkhan & Carlson, 1995). What type of message is presented in green ads that appeal to eco-friendly attributes can play a differentiating role in persuading consumers. Lee and Aaker (2004) suggested that depending on the regulatory focus of advertising messages, it may have different effects on the consumer's information processing process. In an advertising, the loss frame explains the bad consequences that occur when the consumer does not purchase a green product (Chang et al. 2015; Higgins 1997), and the gain frame can make the consumer feel "did the right thing" about their purchase (Lee & Aaker, 2004). According to existing studies, providing information about earning to a consumer with a promotion focus is highly effective, and information about loss can have a negative effect on a consumer with a prevention focus (Higgins et al., 2001; Zhao & Pechmann, 2007).

The promotion and prevention regulatory focused message can be thought of as presenting the effect of green products in green advertising in order to emphasize positive benefits and to suggest that negative effects on the environment can be avoided (Song & Kim, 2018). For example, a promotion message in green advertising emphasizes the cleanliness and beauty of eco-friendly products, and improvement of the environment, while a prevention message in green advertising emphasizes avoiding unethical consequences and reducing environmental pollution from purchasing eco-friendly products. In other words, the promotion-focused message communicates with consumers focusing on how much eco-friendly brands can contribute to environmental protection. On the other hand, in the prevention-focused message, advertisements are presented to consumers, focusing on how negatively it can affect the environment if eco-friendly brands are not used. As such, it can be expected that consumers' reactions will differ depending on the type of message presented in green advertising. Therefore, this study, according to the message type presented in green

advertising, would like to examine whether utilitarian environmental benefit or warm glow due to anti-consumption can have a differential influence on the aspect of the mechanism that affects the attitude toward eco-friendly brands.

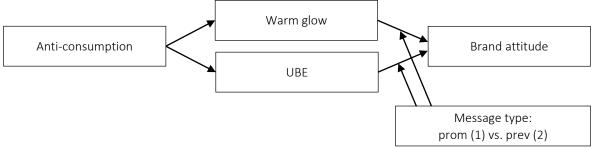
According to Pham and Avnet (2004), promotion-focused individuals are more emotionally affected, while prevention-focused individuals are more cognitively affected. Therefore, more positive effects can be expected when the utilitarian benefit of the product is emphasized through the prevention-focused message. Roy and Ng (2012) revealed that promotion-focused consumers have a more favorable brand attitude toward products that emphasize hedonic benefits, and prevention-focused consumers have a more favorable brand attitude toward products that emphasize utilitarian benefits. Based on these studies, this study attempted to confirm that the value of consumers (utilitarian and emotional) that influence brand attitude perception can vary, depending on the type of a message used in green advertising.

#### 2. AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

This study aims to verify the effect of anti-consumption lifestyles in the context of green advertising. In addition, in green advertising, warm glow and utilitarian environmental benefit might have mediating effects between anti-consumption and brand attitude. This study has meanings as a study on the mechanism by which consumers form brand attitudes in green advertising.

Thus, this study suggests that additional research is needed to obtain a deeper understanding of the process of green advertising performance. The literature also supposes that a quantitative approach to a response of green advertising might be necessary of obtaining more accurate details of the process of consumer value perception in the case of green marketing practice. Given the study aim, this paper contributes to an unrevealed gap in the literature. For the aim of this study, the following hypotheses were established.

H1: Anti-consumption enhances the consumer value perception (utilitarian environmental



Note: UBE - utilitarian environmental benefit.

Figure 1. Research model

benefit and warm glow) of a brand in green advertising.

H2: The perception of consumer value (utilitarian environmental benefit and warm glow) of a brand in green advertising positively influences the brand attitude.

H3: The message type (promotion vs. prevention) in green advertising moderates the effect of utilitarian environmental benefit and warm glow on the brand attitude.

Figure 1 shows the overall model of the study.

#### 3. METHOD

This study used a factorial approach to subject design manipulating the message type in green advertising. The study selected soap as a target product because of convenience of access and familiarity. In the green advertising, a fictitious brand name was suggested, 'SOAP GREEN'. The promotion message contained a statement stating that the use of eco-friendly soap can protect the Arctic glaciers, and the prevention message contains a statement that the use of eco-friendly soap can lead to disappearance of Arctic icebergs. The anti-consumption was measured before green advertising exposure, and then the brand attitude was evaluated. After then, the utilitarian environmental benefits and warm glow benefits were measured.

According to Schmuck et al. (2018), anti-consumption and green consumption-related consumption behaviors are found in various age groups, educational levels, and genders, so there is a limit to the student sample. Therefore, in this study, an inves-

tigation was conducted with samples composed of various ages and genders. Online research was conducted by Macromill Embrain, an online research organization in South Korea. The quota sample was gathered from 265 South Korean consumers aged 19-49 for a survey during October 2020. The majority of the respondents was consisted with age (M = 34.39, SD = 8.025, 20's: 32.8%, 30's: 35.1%, 40's: 32.1%), gender (female 51.3%), and education level (bachelor's degree 73.6%).

The variables used in this study are anti-consumption, utilitarian environmental benefits, warm glow benefits and brand attitudes. Anti-consumption was measured on the following five items (adapted from Lee & Ahn, 2016; Oral & Thurner, 2019;  $\alpha$  = .76): "Before buying an item, I seriously consider whether this item is necessary to me or not;" "Even if I have the money, I try to keep my consumption level at a minimum;" "My life is determined by my own consumption decisions;" "By voluntary reducing my level of consumption, I can avoid stress;" "The less I buy, the better I feel." Since participants saw the green ad, the brand attitude of the product presented in the ad was measured on the following three items ( $\alpha = .94$ ) by MacInnis and Park (1991): "I am favorable to this brand;" "I am positive about this brand;" and "I think this brand is desirable." Next, participants provided their perceptions about utilitarian environmental benefit adapted from Lin et al. (2017) on the following three items ( $\alpha = .93$ ): "This brand respects the environment;" "This brand helps to prevent global warming;" and "Products of this brand do not pollute the environment." To measure warm glow benefit, three items ( $\alpha = .94$ ) were adapted from Lin et al. (2017): "With this brand, I can feel good because I help to protect the environment;" "With this brand, I have the feeling of contributing to the well-being of humanity and

nature;" and "With this brand, I can feel better because I don't harm the environment."

#### 4. RESULTS

To test common method variance (CMV) with Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986), the unrotated factor analysis for all variables extracted more than one factor is done. The first unrotated factor explained 50% of the shared variance among the indicators, which ranged far below the critical threshold of 50% (Fuller et al., 2016) and it was considered that there was no risk of CMV in this study.

The contents of the variables used in this study are as follows (Table 1). All AVEs were greater than .50, meeting the thresholds recommended by Bagozzi & Yi (1988); all supported discriminant validity by exceeding the squared correlations for each pair of constructs.

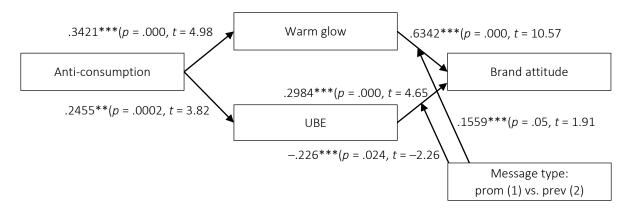
**Table 1.** Mean, standard deviation and correlations

Correlations						
Constructs	1	2	3	4		
Anti-consumption lifestyle	.816					
Utilitarian environmental benefit	.230**	.841				
Warm glow	.294**	.757**	.889			
Brand attitude	.222**	.709**	.791**	.879		
M	4.97	5.30	4.99	4.83		
SD	.935	.999	1.088	1.151		
AVE	0.666	0.708	0.792	0.773		

*Note*: \*\* p < 0.01, the diagonal boldfaced values represent the square root of the average variance extracted of each construct.

To test how anti-consumption increases brand attitude in green ad, a regression analysis was conducted using the utilitarian environmental benefit and warm glow benefit as mediators, and brand attitude as a dependent variable (PROCESS Model 4; Hayes, 2018). A series of bootstrapping tests with 10,000 resamples revealed a significant positive effect of anti-consumption on the perception of utilitarian environmental benefit ( $\beta = .245$ , SE = .06; t(263) = 3.82, p = .0002; H1 is supported) and on the perception of warm glow benefit ( $\beta = .342$ , SE = .06; t(263) = 4.98, p = .000; H1 is supported); and when anti-consumption was controlled, the utilitarian environmental benefit significantly influenced brand attitude  $(\beta = .298, SE = .06; t(262) = 4.66, p = .000; H2$ is supported) and the warm glow benefit significantly influenced brand attitude ( $\beta = .634$ , SE = .06; t(262) = 10.57, p = .000; H2 is supported). The confidence interval for the indirect effect through utilitarian environmental benefit  $(\beta_{\text{indirect}} = .073, \text{ SE} = .03, 95\% \text{ CI } [.019, .148]) \text{ and}$ warm glow benefit ( $\beta_{\text{indirect}} = .217$ , SE = .05, 95% CI [.017, .325]) did not include zero, suggesting a significant indirect effect.

Testing for H3, brand attitude was regressed on utilitarian environmental benefit /warm glow benefit and message type (promotion vs. prevention), while the utilitarian environmental benefit × message type and warm glow benefit × message type were evaluated using PROCESS SPSS macro (Model 1; Hayes, 2018). A series of bootstrapping tests with 10,000 resamples yielded a significant negative interaction effect of UEB × message type ( $\beta = -.226$ , t(261) = -2.26,



**Figure 2.** The results of the analysis of the entire study

p = .024) on the brand attitude, in addition to the main effect of the UEB ( $\beta = 1.15$ , t(211) = 7.22, p = .000), and a significant positive interaction effect of WG × message type ( $\beta = .1559$ , t(261) = 1.91, p = .05) on the brand attitude, in addition to the main effect of the WG ( $\beta = .6136$ , t(211) = 5.08, p = .000). Figure 2 presents the results of the analysis of the entire study.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This study attempted to examine the effect of utilitarian environmental benefit and warm glow perception in the process of consumer's anti-consumption lifestyle influencing brand attitude in green advertising. Furthermore, it was verified which path could have a more positive influence on the brand attitude according to the message type used in the advertisement. The theoretical implication of this study is as follows. First, it is meaningful that the research that reviewed the influence of anti-consumption lifestyle in the context of green advertising supplemented the part that was rarely done before. It was implicitly considered that the anti-consumption lifestyle would be related to the eco-friendly behavior of consumers, and, through empirical research, it was confirmed that the anti-consumption lifestyle can positively influence the consumer's brand attitude in green advertising. Second, a specific mechanism of the process in which anti-consumption lifestyle influences brand attitude was presented. This study confirmed that the anti-consumption lifestyle can positively affect the brand attitude through the perception of utilitarian environmental benefit and warm glow, and thus the process of forming the consumers' brand attitude could be identified. In other words, it was confirmed that the anti-consumption lifestyle can positively influence the brand attitude through consumer's recognition of the utilitarian value and emotional value of the brand. Through this, it can give implications to marketing practitioners about the consumer value that should be emphasized in green advertising.

Third, it was suggested that in green advertising, the effect of mediators affecting a brand attitude of anti-consumption lifestyle may vary according to message types (prevention/promotion). Previous research explored the message types in advertising, but there is not enough research to suggest that message types can influence the mechanism that affects anti-consumption lifestyles. Through this study, it was possible to contribute to making up this research gap.

The practical implications of this study are as follows. First, using the results of this study, targeting consumers of an anti-consumption lifestyle can be effective in positively forming a brand attitude through green advertising. Marketing practitioners will be able to improve the green brand attitude more effectively by communicating green advertising to consumers in an anti-consumption lifestyle who are highly interested in the environment. Second, the effectiveness of improving brand attitudes depends on the message type of green advertising, so, taking this into account, an advertisement design can be proposed. In the case of prevention focused messages, it is suggested to design advertisements to emphasize the recognition of practical benefits, and in the case of promotion focused messages, design advertisements that can emphasize the warm glow of eco-friendly behavior.

Based on this study, future research directions are as follows. In this study, an anti-consumption lifestyle that can affect consumers' brand attitudes toward green advertising was examined. It has been confirmed that a positive effect appeared through utilitarian environmental benefit and warm glow. However, in this study, consumer reactions to virtual green brands were measured. To verify the practical utility of this research model in the future, it is also necessary to use real brands or real green advertising. In addition, the difference in the influence of the anti-consumption lifestyle according to the message type used in green advertising was examined. In future studies, it is necessary to examine how consumer reactions vary according to the types of media that can encounter green advertising. Recently, consumers are often exposed to advertising through mobile media such as social media, so the characteristics of the media can influence the effect of green advertising.

#### CONCLUSION

This study tried to find out how the anti-consumption lifestyle in green advertising positively influences brand attitudes, through what mechanism of consumer perception. The main idea of this study is that consumer's anti-consumption lifestyle can affect the utilitarian environmental benefit and warm glow perception of green advertising, and the anti-consumption lifestyle can have an effect on the green brand attitude as a result of two mediators.

This study indicates that the anti-consumption lifestyle has a positive effect on the utilitarian environmental benefit perception of green advertising, and it has been also revealed that the perception of warm glow is also positively affected by the anti-consumption lifestyle. Furthermore, it has been confirmed that the utilitarian environmental benefit and warm glow of green advertising positively influence the green brand attitude of consumers. Also, it is hypothesized and verified that message types (promotion/prevention) of green advertising can have a differential effect in the above process. As a result, it was confirmed that the perception of utilitarian environmental benefit can have a more positive effect on brand attitudes through a prevention-focused message, and the perception of warm glow can have a more positive effect on brand attitudes through a promotion-focused message.

This study has been confirmed that utilitarian environmental benefit and warm glow can act as mechanisms that positively influence the formation of green brand attitudes through advertisements by consumers' anti-consumption lifestyles. The study also confirmed a positive effect of the anti-consumption lifestyle in green advertising, and it was found that the utilitarian value and emotional value of consumer perception had a mediating effect on the formation of brand attitudes. Thus, it can be suggested that it would be effective to present different types of messages in accordance with the consumer value, which should be emphasized in green advertising. A prevention-focused message is effective for consumers who value the practical value of eco-friendly consumption, while a promotion-focused message is more suitable for consumers who value emotional value.

#### **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

Conceptualization: Hee Jung Lee.
Data curation: Hee Jung Lee.
Formal analysis: Hee Jung Lee.
Funding acquisition: Hee Jung Lee.

Investigation: Hee Jung Lee. Methodology: Hee Jung Lee.

Project administration: Hee Jung Lee.

Resources: Hee Jung Lee. Software: Hee Jung Lee. Supervision: Hee Jung Lee. Validation: Hee Jung Lee. Visualization: Hee Jung Lee.

Writing – original draft: Hee Jung Lee. Writing – review & editing: Hee Jung Lee.

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