

PERCEPTION OF CONSUMERS TOWARDS SOCIAL MEDIA PRACTICES USED BY MARKETERS FOR CREATING BRAND LOYALTY

Uttera Choudhary, Amity University
Priya Jhamb, Amity University
Surinder Sharma, Doaba College Jalandhar

ABSTRACT

The concept of social media is top agenda for all the business firms today. Marketing Executives, Researchers and Consultants all are trying very hard to find out the ways in which a brand can make maximum use of different social media platforms. This research is focused on the statistical technique using the factor analysis on constructing the different factors related to social media which influences the brand loyalty of the consumers. The data were collected using survey questionnaires which were circulated through both offline and online modes. The number of respondents was 239 social media users who are following the different brands on social media. The methodologies used were Descriptive statistics and Factor analysis technique. The results derived shows eight factors which affect the loyalty level of consumers towards their preferred brand. Those factors are: (1) Accessibility; (2) Informative; (3) Brand image; (4) Customer care services; (5) Advertisements; (6) Relationship building; (7) Convenience; (8) Feedback. The findings of this study will enable the firms to have an overview of the perception of consumers towards different social media practices used by marketers. This research study was conducted in the year 2018 in India for FMCG products (Fast Moving Consumer Goods). This research will be very useful for the researchers who are working in the area of developing social media strategies for creation of brand loyalty.

Keywords: Brand Loyalty, Consumers, Factor Analysis, Social Media Marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Social media, in spite of the fact that a generally ongoing wonder, is turning into an undeniably imperative piece of any business promoting and customer base advancement stage. Individuals spend more than 33% of their waking day devouring social media (Lang, 2010). Since starting in 2004 Facebook alone, has in excess of 800 million dynamic clients (www.facebook.com). The remarkable parts of social media and its massive prevalence have revolutionized marketing practices, for example, advertising and promotions. Because of the advantage of internet-based life in interfacing organizations to its end shoppers straightforwardly in short span of time and in an economical way, it has turned out to be main focus in various business ventures. So, more and more industries are implementing social media strategies to gain competitive advantage.

Building and maintaining brand loyalty are one of the central subjects of research for marketers for a long time. Sponsors have utilized distinctive means to keep up the brand loyalty of their clients. One of the present methods is the web-based life showcasing. Creation of brand

loyalty is very essential part of marketing as it assumes essential part in the success of a business. Web-based social networking platforms encourage relationship building among consumers and brand. This relationship building further leads to framing of brand trust and brand image via web-based networking platforms. Various loyal followers who are interested in your brand follow your posts, discuss about you, shows interest in your product or services, post positive reviews on the same which leads to increase in the value of your brand (Dholakia & Durham, 2010). This value addition leads to creation of brand loyalty which is the ultimate aim of the business. The format of this research study is as per the following. We begin with brief review of literature followed by the research methodology then findings and analysis toward the end. We close with discussion, conclusion and restrictions of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are distinctive definitions for web-based social networking however we depend on Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) who express a gathering of web-based application that works with respect to the ideological and mechanical establishments of web2.0 and it permits creation and trade of client produced content. There are a wide range of stages for online networking, for example, person to person communication, content informing, photograph sharing, weblogs and talk discussions and the most mainstream web-based social networking application are Face book, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and Wikipedia.

Bashar et al. (2012) has done a detailed study to understand the effectiveness of social media as a tool of marketing. An effort has been made to analyze the extent in which social networking sites can help the consumers in making their purchase decision. Results of their study suggested that social media is growing at a very fast speed and has a very bright future in the coming years of marketing. So, it is time for the firms to implement their marketing strategies by making use of social media and create fan pages for their brand so that maximum people can follow their brand.

Social media has a very crucial role to play in the marketing strategies of a business. According to Kim & Ko (2012), social media can have a dramatic impact on the reputation of a brand (Kim & Ko, 2010). Social networking sites helps in reducing the misunderstanding and prejudice towards the brands. Furthermore, it acts as a medium of communication between brand and its consumers and elevates the brand value by providing a stage to transfer ideas online.

Vries et al. (2012) in their study explains if the companies positioned their brand post on the top of the brand fan pages it will automatically increase the popularity of the brand. Along with this there are different factors such as vivid and interactive brand post characteristics also influence the amount of comments and likes of the brand post. There are different ways by which companies can increase their likes and comments which include posting a question or some interactive brand post which will attract the attention of the users. Number of comments both positive and negative comments are significant indicators of brand popularity and brand fans are more likely to visit the stores more and they will act as a very good source of positive word of mouth.

Laroche et al. (2012) found evidence of positive effects of online brand communities over the fundamental network components and esteem creation rehearses in the networks and in addition on brand loyalty and brand trust. The main conclusion of their research study was that brand trust has a significant job in conversion of worth creation practices into brand loyalty.

Georgios & Sergios (2014) has explained the different reasons that leads to a brand get involved with social media networking sites. Social media has evolved at a very fast pace and

gaining popularity among the people continuously (Dickey & Lewis, 2010). Thus, in order to keep up with the technological developments' companies decide to register themselves on social media (Gallaughner & Ransbotham, 2010). Viral nature of these networking sites has also made them popular. In the era of Digitalization these networking sites are fastest mode of spreading the brand name or any other relevant information related to companies. Cost saving and competitive advantages are another important factor which pushes the companies to get them registered on social media platforms.

Nisar (2016) investigates in their research study that how social networking sites can be utilized for achieving and maintaining the consumer brand loyalty. The research shows that consumer loyalty, social media and brand are strongly related to each other. Customer loyalty can be divided into two categories, one is behavioral and other is attitudinal (Jacoby & Kyner, 1973; Julander et al., 1997; Nilsson & Sandberg, 2010). Findings of the study indicates that consumer shows their loyalty by posting positive comments or feedback on brand fan pages on social media but on the other hand consumers are not much interested in recommending or encouraging their friends or family by making use of social media platforms.

Yoshida et al. (2018) has explained the significance of consumer engagement on social media with the brand and behavioral brand loyalty. This study suggested various new ways of using social media for the engagement of consumer. Online brand community identification, opinion seeking and entertainment value of social media pages are the important factors which positively influence online brand community identification which further has a strong impact on brand related social media engagement. These findings are similar to the previous research studies that shows keeping, forming & extending relationships with others in social media communities were the main motivation for social media engagement (Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Mollen & Wilson, 2010). Behavioral brand loyalty is positively influenced by social media engagement.

Coelho et al. (2018) has demonstrated in their research paper the impact of social media in forming of relationship between consumer and brand. It was found that one of the significant reasons for enhancing the consumer brand relationship is brand trust, loyalty and consumer brand identification. Consumer brand identification plays a crucial role in conversion of consumer brand community interaction into consumer brand relationship. Social relationship among the members of communities provides a positive environment to facilitate communication to gain trust and loyalty of consumers (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Habibi et al., 2014; Labrecque, 2014; Laroche et al., 2013).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objective

To study the perception of consumers towards social media practices used by marketers for creating brand loyalty.

Sample and Data Collection

In this research primary data has been used to study the perception of consumers towards various social media practices used by marketers for creation of brand loyalty. The data were collected using a survey form which was distributed to different social media users who are using social media platforms. Convenience sampling was used to draw the samples. All the statements

were framed on five-point Likert scale where (5=strongly agree and 1=strongly disagree). Sample size for the research was 239 respondents. SPSS was utilized to perform statistical investigation of the information gathered from the questionnaires. The examination instruments utilized were factor analysis, reliability analysis, mean score and descriptive statistics. McClave et al. (2005) has defined descriptive statistics as a method in which one can make use of numerical and various graphical methods to summarize the information revealed by data into a simple and convenient manner which is very easy to understand.

Altman et al. (2006) stated that pilot testing is a small experiment which is undertaken to test the results and improve the quality of information for the final analysis. The results of pilot study provide the value of reliability test by using Cronbach's alpha to find out the internal consistency of scales (Coakes & Ong, 2011). Cronbach's Alpha value for testing the reliability of questionnaire should be more than 0.6 (Moh & Zaidatun, 2001). In this research the value of Cronbach's is 0.914. This shows that questionnaire used in the study has a high reliability value.

Factor analysis provides a class of methods essentially utilized for summarization and reduction of data by recognizing latent variables (Malhotra & Dash, 2009). A factor is a basic measurement that clarifies the connection among a set of variables. Findings of the survey were analyzed by using Confirmatory factor analysis.

FINDINGS/ANALYSIS

The numbers of respondents who have participated in this research paper were 239 who were active social media users. The collected data was significant as sample size in excess of two hundred is satisfactory to satisfy the factor analysis. The outcomes or discoveries are partitioned into different sub parts which are demographic analysis, factor analysis, reliability analysis, mean score and standard deviation.

Demographic Analysis

The demographic profiles of the respondents were shown in Table 1 according to variable gender, age, occupation, income level of the respondents. According to the gender 28.45% respondents were male and rest 71.55% was female. out of total respondents majority of them comes in the category of age group between 19-24 years old which constitutes the 69.87% of the total respondents followed by the category of age limit of up to 18 years which constitute the 23.01% and at the last comes the category of age group 25-34 and 35-44 constituting the 5.44% and 1.67% respectively. The respondents were divided into four categories of occupation namely student, self-employed, working professional and unemployed. According to the respondents 61.92% comes under the category of student followed by the category of working professional which comprises the 23.01% of the total respondents and self-employed and unemployed category comprises the 9.21% and 5.86% of the respondents respectively. The last category of demographic profile was income level of the respondent's majority of respondents were those who do not have any income which is 63.60% of the total respondents next comes the category of income between 20000-50000 which is 16.74% of total respondents and at the last two categories were income up to 20000 and income above 50000 these categories comprise the 9.62% and 10.04% of total respondents respectively.

Demographic Factors		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	68	28.45
	Female	171	71.55
Age	Upto 18 yrs	55	23.01
	19-24 yrs	167	69.87
	25-34 yrs	13	5.44
	35-44 yrs	4	1.67
Occupation	Students	148	61.92
	Self Employed	22	9.21
	Working Professionals	55	23.01
	Unemployed	14	5.86
Income	Upto 20000	23	9.62
	20000-50000	40	16.74
	50000 and above	24	10.04
	None	152	63.6

Reliability Analysis

The main aim of this study is to find out the various social media related factors that influence the loyalty level of consumers towards their preferred brand. The results of reliability analysis provide the value of Cronbach's was 0.914 any value which is more than 0.6 is acceptable value for reliability analysis. Hence high reliability value was being shown by the instrument used in this study which shows a good internal consistency of scales (Table 2).

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
0.914	39

Factor Analysis

For constructing the new factors which affect the loyalty level of consumers towards their preferred brand on social media factor analysis was used. A Total of 39 items were there in the questionnaire. In Table 3 Bartlett's Sphericity test is provided. This test shows whether the variables have high degree of correlation or not. KMO has been used to find out the adequacy of the sample so that the appropriateness of the factor analysis can be determined. High value between (0.5-1.0) indicates that the factor is relevant (Coakes & Ong, 2011). The minimum value which indicates a good degree of correlation is 0.5. Here the value of KMO as shown in Table 3 is 0.901 which is greater than the minimum of 0.5. So, it shows results of the factor analysis are significant. After undergoing the confirmatory factor analysis 8 factors have been emerged and total variance explained by these 8 factors was 58.01%. These 8 factors represent the basis for perception of consumers towards social media practices used by marketers for creating brand loyalty.

Factor loading ranges from 0.437 to 0.820. which indicates that various social media related factors such as Advertising, Relationship building, Convenience, Feedback, Customer Care services, Accessibility, Informative, Brand image etc. influence the perception of consumers in a positive way which means that these factors help in creation of brand loyalty of consumers towards their preferred brand (Table 4).

Table 3 KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.901
Approx. Chi-Square	2628.754
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity df	561.000
Sig.	0.000

Table 4 FACTOR LOADINGS OF THE ITEMS IN CFA		
Construct	Items	Factor Loading
Advertisement	Social media is the most significant tool for creating brand awareness.	0.67
	A Social media platform provides mass coverage of customers.	0.66
	Social media facilitates the introduction of new products in an easy way.	0.55
	Social media helps in making the presence of brand felt in the market.	0.53
Feedback	Online after sales surveys are significant from the point of view of companies seeking honest feedback from the consumers.	0.52
	Social media develops the interest to view the wide range of products available on social media.	0.52
	Social media facilitates the comparison of different sales promotion offers provided by the companies.	0.50
	Positive feedback shared on social media leads to good reputation which further creates brand loyalty.	0.43
Relationship Building	A Social media platform creates a sense of belongingness between brand and its consumers.	0.65
	Social media facilitates the targeting of potential group of customers.	0.64
	Social media creates strengthen and enhance the relationship of brand with customers.	0.50
	Social media marketing strategies like free delivery. Demonstration etc. are very effective weapon to win the hearts of the consumers.	0.48
Brand Image	Social media campaigns like celebrity meet up, foreign trips etc. are strong tool for building brand loyalty.	0.71
	Companies who are using social media marketing strategies have positive image over those who Don't.	0.57
	Posts and comments shared on competitors brand fan page can be beneficial for evaluation of self-brand image of the companies.	0.55
	Tweets and comments about the brand on social media are the most significant indicators of the popularity of a brand.	0.46
	Social media can act as most reliable medium of sharing of experience related to product and services.	0.70

Informative	Social media is reliable source of all the relevant information related to product and services.	0.56
	Promotional offers generated on social media can be viewed and accessed at any time.	0.52
	Brands can use social media to understand the need and preference of their customers in more effective manner.	0.50
Convenience	Social media facilitates the building of trust between consumer and brand.	0.63
	It is easy to compare offers available on social media.	0.61
	Social media has become a sophisticated method of buying.	0.54
Customer Care Services	Social media is the best and quick mode of solving the complaints and grievances of the consumers	0.68
	Customer feedback forms on social media are very effective method to measure the satisfaction level of consumers.	0.56
Accessibility	The flash of offers can be easily explored on social media.	0.82
	Advertisements on social media are more economical and time saving.	0.73

Table 5 MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, RELIABILITY STATISTICS FOR CONSTRUCT MEASURES				
Constructs	No. of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Accessibility	2	4.05	0.642	0.612
Informative	4	3.87	0.654	0.639
Brand Image	4	3.80	0.633	0.682
Customer Care Services	2	3.95	1.155	0.620
Advertisement	4	4.12	0.583	0.706
Relationship Building	4	3.98	0.626	0.718
Convenience	3	3.92	0.657	0.675
Feedback	4	4.04	0.587	0.768

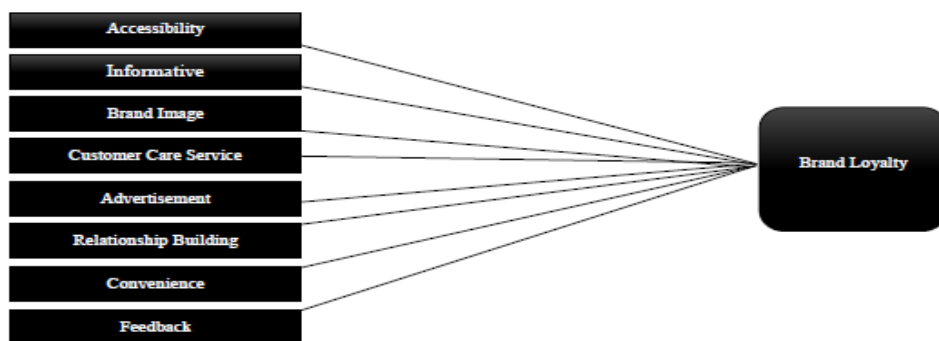


FIGURE 1
FACTORS AFFECTING BRAND LOYALTY ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

Figure 1 shows the different factors related to social media which influence the level of consumer loyalty towards their preferred brand. These factors are discussed below in detail.

RESULTS

Constructs of different factors which influence the brand loyalty of consumers on social media.

Accessibility

The most significant construct was defined as “*Accessibility*”. Factor loadings of this construct were 0.822 and 0.733 which is the maximum in all the derived factors in the factor analysis. The loading pattern of this variable clearly indicates that it is most significant factor which influences the loyalty level of consumers towards their preferred brand. The value of

Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.612. Mean value and standard deviation values were 4.05 and 0.642 respectively. Social media platforms are very easily accessible and covers huge customer based in a very short span of time and at a very low cost as compared to other traditional method of marketing. So, Marketers are making best possible use of social media to influence the level of loyalty of consumers towards their preferred brand (Table 5).

Informative

Second important construct was named as “*Informative*”. Highest factor loading value of this was 0.703 and lowest loading was 0.502 which is a very good indicator of the significance of this construct for influencing the brand loyalty of the consumers. The value of Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.639. Mean value and standard deviation values were 3.87 and 0.654 respectively. Brands can make use of social media to understand the need and preference of the consumers in more effective manner. Social media users use this platform to share their experience or feedback related to the product and service they have used which further acts as a source of reliable information related to the brand for its users.

Brand Image

The third construct was defined as Brand image. Brand image refers to the general impression of a product in the minds of real and potential consumers. Factor loadings for this construct ranged from 0.459 to 0.710. The value of Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.682. Mean value and standard deviation values were 3.80 and 0.663. Tweets and comments about the brand on social media are the powerful indicators of the popularity of a brand and these positive tweets and comments about the brand helps in building of a fair brand image.

Customer Care Services

The next construct represented the different services which are available on social media to the consumers like complaint redressal platforms and after sales services etc. Therefore, it was named as “*Customer care services*”. Factor loadings were 0.555 to 0.678. The value of Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.620. Mean value and standard deviation values were 3.95 and 1.155 respectively. Increased competition and consumer awareness lead to growth of the phenomenon customer care services. These days marketing does not end only after you sell the product but it continues even after the delivery of the product. Social media facilitates the customer care service in very effective manner as it serves as best and quick mode of solving the complaints and grievances of the consumers. Brands which provides good customer care services will have more

loyal customers compared to those which do not provide customer care services.

Advertisement

The next construct related to items representing brand awareness, introduction of new products, presence of brand in the market etc. was named as advertisement. Factor loadings of this construct ranged from 0.53 to 0.67. Value of Cronbach's Alpha was 0.718. Mean value and standard deviation values were 4.12 and 0.583 respectively. The loading pattern of this factor shows that advertisement is very significant factor which influence the loyalty level of consumers towards their preferred brand on social media.

Relationship Building

The next construct was defined as Relationship building. Factor loadings of items ranged from 0.483 to 0.658. Loading pattern of this factor shows that it is one of the most crucial factors which influence the loyalty level of consumers. The Cronbach's Alpha value for this construct was 0.718 which shows good internal consistency of scale. Mean value and standard deviation values were 3.98 and 0.626 respectively. Social media platforms create a sense of belongingness between brand and its customers as it provides a platform for communication between brand and its consumers. Effective communication nourishes the bond between consumers and brand which helps in relationship building.

Convenience

Second least significant construct was named as "*Convenience*". This construct includes the items like availability of different promotional offers and their comparison on social media platforms. Loading Pattern of the factors range between 0.541 to 0.633. The value of Cronbach's Alpha for this construct was 0.675. Mean value and standard deviation values were 3.92 and 0.657 respectively. Nowadays every single brand is registered on social media and it becomes very easy for the consumers to compare the different offers available on social media which enables the consumers to make best choice in a very convenient manner.

Feedback

The least significant construct was named as Feedback. Factor loadings of this construct ranged from 0.437 to 0.528 which were minimum out of all the derived factors. It represents the items related to after sales surveys; feedback shared on social media platforms was named as Feedback. To know the opinion and perception of consumers towards their preferred brand it is very important to know their feedback. The value of Cronbach's Alpha was 0.768. Mean value and standard deviation values were 4.04 and 0.587 respectively. Social media being the effective mode of communication serves as a tool to measure the satisfaction level of consumers towards their preferred brand and this can be done by using online after sales surveys. This feature of social media helps in creation of loyalty of consumers towards their preferred brands.

Results shows that above mentioned factors related to social media are very significant for a company to influence the level of loyalty of consumers towards their preferred brand. It was found that Accessibility and Informative are the most significant factors for creation of brand loyalty followed by Brand image, Customer care services and Advertisements. The least significant factors based upon the factor loadings were Relationship building, Convenience and

Feedback. Efforts should be made by the companies to handle social media platforms more effectively so as to make maximum use of this platform for attracting and retaining the existing consumers.

DISCUSSION

There is a debate over the relevance of marketing and branding activities on social media. Few empirical studies can be relied upon and others are descriptive and narrative about social media and its significance. The researchers have conflicts on the issue of social media. For example, many believe that social media provides a perfect platform to companies so that they can reach to their customers and others believe that presence of brand on social media spoil the environment which is to be used for people to interact with their friends (Fournier & Avery, 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Information collected through survey showed that consumers interacts with brands because they like the products, think about the brand and its offerings and have feelings of social interactions, revealing social and hedonic motives (Park and Kim, 2014). This study has demonstrated the benefits of using the social media platforms and how the firms can drive the benefits out of it. It was found that presence of brand communities on social media is essential for strengthening the brand loyalty and trust. The findings of this study are very similar with other studies which proved that brand loyalty is positively influenced by participation in social virtual communities (Casalo et al., 2010; Kardaras et al., 2003). The results showed that consumers use social media for experiencing the interaction and connection with the brand. Brands are playing an active role in these experiences, this will facilitate the emotional connection between Brand and consumer (Popp & Woratschek, 2017). Brands with established identities enjoy a competitive advantage whenever consumer makes a buying decision. This research will enable the marketers in implementation of social media. Economical, wide coverage, convenience and popularity of social media persuades the marketers to make use of social media in best possible way.

CONCLUSION

This research paper shows the influence of various social media related factors on consumer brand loyalty. In what manner these factors change or influence the perception of consumers towards their preferred brand on social media. The outcome of this research provides us 8 factors which were effectively constructed by making use of the factor analysis technique and described as different factors which affect the loyalty level towards their preferred brand on Social media. These factors are given in their order of importance these are as follows: (1) Accessibility; (2) Informative; (3) Brand image; (4) Customer care services; (5) Advertisements; (6) Relationship building; (7) Convenience; (8) Feedback. Age of the respondents has very significant influence on the social media and brand loyalty as it can be concluded that out of total respondents around 70% of the respondents comes under the age group of 19-24 years and more than 61% of total respondents are students with no income. So demographic information shows that the most active social media users are the students with no income and age group of 19-24 years who are following their preferred Brand on social media and their loyalty level is influenced by presence of a brand on social media. The findings of the research paper confirm that brand loyalty of consumers and social media presence has a positive relationship. This research will be very helpful to the market researchers who are working towards developing and maintaining the different social media strategies which will be used for creation and maintain the brand loyalty of

the consumers towards their preferred Brand. We believe that advertisers and researchers should give due importance to the social media-based marketing because of its uniqueness and rapid growth.

LIMITATION AND SCOPE OF FUTURE RESEARCH

Regardless of these contributions, we additionally recognize the confinements of this investigation and accordingly propose new roads for future research. We have demonstrated the distinctive components identified with social media which impact the loyalty level of customers towards their favored brand. In this exploration we have basically centered on general ideas and ideas in the web-based life and brand loyalty literature. However, in future analysts may think about more factors and more factors to have deeper insight of this topic.

However, it should be kept in mind that social media-based factors like Advertisements, Customer care services, Informative, Accessibility etc. are not that easy to manage because in this environment consumers are in dominating position than ever before. They can easily express and voice out their opinions, ideas, and experience related to their preferred brand on the other hand companies or brands does not have much ability to control or manage their viewpoints. Consumers can make best possible use of customer care service platforms for redressal of their grievances and make complaints for the bad experience if they are upset with the brand. So, if a brand decides to make use of social media platform to increase the loyalty level of the consumers, they should be more cautious about the potential consequences. Accordingly, more research is expected to study and break down such consequences and introduce successful techniques to manage social media platforms for creation of brand loyalty. Another important limitation of this can be the dynamic environment of social media here things changes every single minute. So, one of the fascinating roads for future research may be to follow this dynamism with regards to social media to perceive how the impacts develop after some time. Limited number of respondents, limited time frame and restricted geographical area of research are other important limitations of this research study.

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