Exploring the Relationship between Social Media Marketing and Consumer Brand Switching Decision

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Abstract

The current study emphasized the correlation between consumer decisions and social media marketing (SMM) regarding switching brands within a certain sector. As per the study, social media advertising is the most important factor for firms to raise brand recognition. Businesses may efficiently encourage their items on online platforms while grabbing consumers' attention. To perform the study effectively, the author, in this case, included previous research in the literature review. The significance of brand switching, engagement, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), and advertising is addressed in this study as it relates to SMM and customer-based brand-switching decisions. Online or social media platforms now play a critical role in determining customer views and preferences, giving businesses previously unheard-of chances to interact with their target market. The study sheds light on how these social media interactions impact customer brand loyalty and brand-switching decisions. The study, based on quantitative analysis of consumer and engagement metrics from social media to meet our goals, offers a more inclusive knowledge of the overall link amid the factors that were found. Findings show a favourable correlation between the activity of social media and loyalty to the brand among consumers. Social media users that interact with a brand more regularly have higher brand loyalty, lowering the likelihood of transferring brands. e-WOM also significantly impacts how people choose which brands to buy. Brand loyalty is considerably increased by positive e-WOM spread via social media platforms, and the chance of brand switching is decreased. Additionally, the study explores how different advertising formats and strategies alter consumer perceptions, which has influenced their brand loyalty and switching behaviour over the years. This is done on the topic of brand switching by customers. In conclusion, the current study offers important new perspectives on how social media marketing is developing and how it affects brand choice.
***Keywords:** Social Media Marketing, Brand Switching, Advertisement, e-WOM, Interactive Marketing, Brand Awareness*

Introduction

Social media is one of the communicative platforms that help users interact across the globe and share information. As per Anderson et al. (2014), this social media platform enables multinational firms to gather in one place and create value among various customers. Wang et al. (2012) mentioned that social media-based marketing is a novel strategy that implies internet use. This marketing strategy represents numerous brands to be involved in social networking platforms to achieve the established objective and goals of the company. Several channels associated with social media networks consist of videos, blogs, and certain forums. Moreover, brands can establish media via a self-media marketing strategy for online markets. According to Niu et al. (2021), in marketing strategy, social media is denoted as an inclusive website linked with the main characteristic of the network. The distinguishing feature of the website is that several contents present on the website are from the users, and there is no direct association between the website and the user.

Rialti et al. (2017) explained that the satisfaction level of customers is one of the widely studied topics by researchers for their impact on purchasing intention with regards to the online behaviour of customers. As per Brandtner et al. (2021), despite various studies focusing on satisfaction levels, a relatively small number have analyzed the association between satisfaction of customer levels and brand switching. The increasingly large variety of businesses and increased economy sharing has complicated customer behaviour online. According to Agha et al. (2021), switching brands is considered a critical concept for the business as it shows that the previous brand has no value for the customer and does not meet the expectation of customers. The novel brand is considered to be highly attractive among customers. The negative aspect of brand switching refers to a reduction of market share for the business. According to Hawkins et al. (2019), the market share statistic represents that the US has lost half of its potential customers over the centuries, and this switch of brand at this rate reduces the business's performance level. Stylidis et al. (2020) mentioned that several businesses like to have customer increase in value of the products for their quality product; they initiate the branding process for their products by several strategies to create value among customers and encourage the potential customer to buy the goods from the particular brand.

Problem statement

The explosion of social media platform marketing has changed how companies communicate with their target customers in the quickly developing digital age. However, marketers and companies alike continue to have serious concerns about how social media marketing affects customer behaviour, particularly with regard to decisions to switch brands. Companies are concerned about keeping their potential customer and promoting brand loyalty in an increasingly cutthroat industry must comprehend the connection between social media marketing and brand switching of customers. The issue at stake is determining how much social media marketing affects consumers' decisions to switch brands. While earlier studies have emphasized the benefits related to contact of social media and electronic word of mouth on brand loyalty, in-depth studies that look at the direct relationship between these factors and consumer brand-switching tendencies are lacking. Furthermore, a full analysis is needed to determine whether social media marketing worsens or lessens brand-switching behaviours.

Scope of the study

The study significantly tries to overcome the gap in the area by analyzing various factors of SMM strategies that impact on consumer behaviour and brand switching and may provide findings in more active approaches for customers to achieve in depth understanding into the sportswear industries with various products and services. Therefore, the present study aims to analyse the association between customer behaviour and social media in brand switching in various industries.

Significance of the study

The significance of the present study is to explore how social media marketing affects customer decisions to switch brands. The main topics of the study will be the factors of brand switching, social media engagement, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), and social media ads. Qualitative interviews will be done in order to comprehend how customers feel about social media marketing and their experiences using it. In-depth information about the variables affecting brand loyalty and brand-switching decisions will be provided through the study. In order to analyze the connections between social media engagement, e-WOM, social media ads, and consumer brand switching choices, the study will use quantitative data analysis tools. Customer, social media engagement platforms, and other pertinent information will be gathered and examined to reach

significant conclusions. This study aims to provide insightful information on the connection between social media marketing and customer planning to transfer brands. This study intends to offer marketers and organizations practical techniques to increase brand loyalty and lessen brand-switching tendencies in the digital marketplace by examining the effect of social media engagement, e-WOM, and social media marketing.

Literature Review

When a consumer chooses a different brand within a numerous product group, this practice is recognized as "brand switching." According to Godey et al. (2016) analyzed, social media advertising affects consumer decisions to switch brands. The study found that social media advertising that was both personalized and interesting increased brand loyalty and decreased the risk of brand switching. McClure et al. (2020) investigated how brand interactions on social media influenced customer behaviour. Positive interactions, including rapid responses to consumer queries, increased brand loyalty and decreased brand switching tendencies. Similarly, Ansari et al. (2019) investigated how social media reviews affect consumers' decision to switch brands. They discovered that negative word-of-mouth regarding any brand on social media significantly influenced brand-switching behaviour, highlighting the need of controlling online brand reputation.

Al-Kwifi et al. (2015) conducted an analysis showing that the level of brand switching might change over time and could vary for certain brands including cars, TVs, and various household products. The study also demonstrated that the effect of the market leader and distinctive product attributes that distinguish a brand from rivals substantially impact brand switching. In contrast, Koech et al. (2023) observed that the implication of the product and the associated product satisfaction fail to comprehend the behaviour of customers towards brand switching, yet, the involvement of the product has shown to have a moderate influence on switching the brand that, indicates that customers are likely to experience the new brand and figure out the product that best fit with their needs and preferences.

The study also suggested that markets need to analyse their sales constantly to reduce the brand switching behaviour among their potential customer and need to comprehend customer participation with the product. Severt et al. (2022) analysed the relationship between customer satisfaction and brand switching, and the findings focus on the customer and marketplace playing

a key role in purchasing. It has also been analysed that customer satisfaction positively impacts repurchasing behaviour of customers. Another study by Haralayya et al. (2021) comprehended the time of customer brand switching in the automobile industry. It linked it with various demographic characteristics and perceptions of a particular product. The study findings were associated with income rate followed by low education of earliest switchers. Ki et al. (2019) stated that customers could perceive the same brand differently at the initial stage when a particular product is launched in the market. However, after utilizing the product, buyers are seeking for a different brand that meets the needs of many clients. In some ways, it was understandable why the brand changed from iPhone to another product which was Blackberry, when the latter was introduced to the market, and then from iPhone to another electronics since each new product or brand is seen to provide consumers greater options.

Social media interaction refers to online conversations and interactions between businesses and consumers on social media platforms. Pang et al. (2021) looked at brand loyalty in relation to social media interactions. They found that brand loyalty rose and brand switching reduced when businesses and consumers interacted on social media. Oni et al. (2021) study looked at how social media interactions affect consumer trust in brands. They came to the conclusion that proactive contacts, such as attending to consumer complaints and comments, improved brand trust and eventually enhanced brand loyalty. According to Langaro et al. (2018), consumers actively promote a brand on social media by discussing the benefits and drawbacks of various goods and brand services. Social media marketing, as per Cheung et al. (2021), enables customer and brand involvement regardless of the time or location, which ultimately leads in warm interest and love for a certain brand. Having a strong connection and affiliation with a certain brand utilising social media marketing platforms is beneficial for building a strong brand image, claim Barreda et al. (2020). Additionally, Dwivedi et al. (2021) emphasised that social media marketing strategy offers customers several opportunities to participate in potentially useful conversations and support the dissemination of highly creative ideas.

Additionally, according to Ho et al. (2020), presenting specific information pertinent to a company's image promotes customer and brand engagement by grabbing customers' attention. It also encourages customers' perception of the brand as an extension of their identity. Similar to this, a research by Aljumah et al. (2021) highlighted how the pandemic crisis affected different

marketing techniques and examined how social media discussion of certain products had a significant influence on brand equity and awareness. The term "Electronic Word of Mouth" (e-WOM) describes the online exchange of views, stories, and product recommendations. An ie-depth analysis of e-WOM studied by Randabunga et al. (2021) revealed that while negative e-WOM promoted brand switching, positive e-WOM substantially impacted consumer brand decisions and brand loyalty. Cheung et al. (2012) investigated the effects of social media e-WOM on brand trust and brand loyalty. They concluded that positive e-WOM on social media positively affected brand trust, which, in turn, increased brand loyalty and reduced brand switching tendencies.

Additionally, Farzin et al. (2022) found that e-WOM and online advertisement are the key factors that impact customer and brand image and highly motivate customers' purchase decisions. However, several studies have also researched customer perception and behaviour regarding social media platforms for industries. As per Kapoor et al. (2013), the extent of e-WOM is associated with customer behaviour, content sharing, publication, and brand experience via social media platforms. Marchand et al. (2017) explained that customers are hugely influenced and guided by the reviews that are presented online or by the ratings, as these elements are considered to be key resources of word of mouth. Similarly, Wang et al. (2021) stated that when negative external e-WOM is spread through social media platforms, it is considered highly damaging in terms of brand image and causes serious consequences for the brand's reputation. In contrast, Hermana et al. (2019) recognized that achieving positive reviews have an effective brand image. The brand image could be accomplished by incorporating a problem-solving approach, providing flexibility, and creating positive action for the brand that helps to reduce the negative e-WOM. The study also found that the impact of e-WOM on brand equity is considered strong when compared with the conventional spread of information through word of mouth as it is easily used, considered suitable, independency, and available. According to Balakrishnan et al. (2014), customers hugely depend upon e-WOM biases for selecting a specific product and service as e-WOM is considered to be a reference to potential customers at the time of the process of purchase. In the meantime, Koch et al. (2020) realized the huge rise in the implementation of social media platforms to publish the reviews associated with the purchasing experience that comprises customer satisfaction levels during the pandemic crisis.

According to Godey et al. (2016), brand awareness is one of the tactics for getting buyers to know a certain brand. Seo et al. (2018) stated that by enabling specific companies to connect with possible target customers, social media marketing methods aid in building brand recognition and a brand image. According to Bruhn et al. (2012), one benefit for the brand to successfully educate and promote its brand image and awareness using social media is that social media marketing strategy is not time-bound. Bilgin et al. (2018) explained that establishing strong brand awareness significantly impacts other associated brands consisting of brand image and brand awareness. Additionally, Tunjungsari et al. (2020) found that brand awareness impacts brand loyalty, and customers are willing to pay prices considered high. Customers who immediately recognise the brand image or logo are more likely to recommend the specific brand and are ready to pay expensive pricing. Similarly, previous studies conducted by Sinha et al. (2018) also showed that increasing brand awareness might help to generate maximum revenue in the marketplace.

Social media is another crucial avenue where clients spend a significant amount of time. It is becoming a popular medium for brand and consumer communication. According to Schivinski et al. (2016), communication on social media platforms is classed based on the material that the user creates. Many marketplaces encourage the use of social media to interact and engage with potential consumers efficiently as well as to develop favourable consumer habits towards a certain brand. Customers, however, utilise social media to research the necessary information, greatly easing decision-making. Social media platforms have effectively increased the intensity of customers communicating with brands. As per Saydan et al. (2019), interaction with social media by the customer increases the impact of customer attitude, which also includes the effect of brand awareness. Social media advertising has evolved as a crucial component of brand communication on digital platforms. Anyanwu et al. (2020) meta-analysis of social media advertising studies showed that social media ads that were well-targeted and captivating positively impacted brand loyalty and reduced brand switching behaviour. Smith and Fischer (2019) examined how social media advertising affects consumers' feelings about brands. They discovered genuine and pertinent social media marketing enhanced brand perceptions and strengthened customer loyalty.

Kumar et al. (2016) stated two main significant outcomes of customer interaction with brands, leading to brand switching and purchasing process. According to Atulkar et al. (2020), the main focus of the customer while getting involved with a particular brand is to acquire the expected value from the strong relationship. The significant connection among the customer and the brand results in dissolution when customers do not experience the expected value from a particular brand. This is when customers switch their brands at an increasing rate as they are not satisfied with the resources and service offered by the brand. Liao et al. (2021) explained that when customer brand switching increases, social media becomes an effective source for providing information and alternative brand approach.

According to Yadav and Rahman (2017), advertising through social media is the strategy that helps companies or brands to create, interact or offer online market products to consumers and stakeholders. It helps the company to build strong relationships with the clients by providing them with goods and products according to their demands. Furthermore, Tuten (2008) asserts that businesses can interact with potential clients through social media marketing strategies and trends. It also aids in increasing the brand value while influencing their brand switching decision. It also states that social media advertising plays a vital and significant role for brands, which helps them to create brand awareness effectively towards the customers.

Furthermore, Gulamali and Persson (2017) assert that brand switching is a phenomenon through which customers need to switch towards a different brand to eliminate the previous brand's problems. According to Schivinski et al. (2020), brand satisfaction plays a substantial role in the brand-switching decision of consumers. It is the brand's responsibility to promote their products effectively, which would help them to increase the fulfilment of the potential customers. Consumers are more likely to buy the product regarding brand recognition, increasing their trust and driving sales for the organisation. Effective social media marketing provides the opportunity to build brand loyalty, word of mouth and referrals for the company.

In contrast, Bowen et al. (2021) said that social media is becoming the main method for consumers through which these individuals can interact and communicate material in their daily lives. The ability of social media is constantly expanding regarding connecting people. Moreover, SMM of brands provides numerous life services while emphasising the brand-switching decision of the consumers. In support, Busalim and Hussin (2016) assert that social

media marketing has changed the way of communication, cooperation, lives, and operations of businesses with the appearance and development of e-commerce models.

The present study incorporated the signalling theory to analyse the connection within and consumer brand-switching behaviour and social media marketing. Signalling theory was developed by Michael Spence (1973) to deal with the degree of uncertainty or data that is irregular in the market. In other words, Eun Lee and Stoel (2014) assert that one brand or party has more and better information than another. Signalling theory helps to reduce the gap and limitation for the brands to improve the brand switching decision of consumers to increase the trustworthiness and efficiency. Haudi et al. (2022) assert that brand awareness coupled with potent associations produces a certain image of the brand. Brand associations comprise a network of brand knowledge and various examples, concepts, facts, and episodes. These linkages are essential to salespeople and directors for brand positioning and differentiation strategies and for creating favourable attitudes towards brands. Furthermore, brand associations work better for influencing the consumer for brand switching when these factors are based on various exposures to communications.

Additionally, according to Bushara et al. (2023), social media is thought to take on a variety of shapes and operate on a variety of systems, including weblogs, online blogging and networks, microblogs, wikis, audio files, photo and video sharing, online dating, and social bookmarking. Additionally, it gives people a place to communicate virtually. As a result, social media networks provide individuals with new and innovative ways, including; social communication, establishing contact, exchanging information, creating content, and participating in social movements online. Social media also offers businesses opportunities to exchange information with their subscribers. Customers routinely read social media sites daily to make the brand-switching decision.

However, Li, Larimo, and Leonidou (2023) claim that the utilisation of social media advertisement has led companies to two main significant opportunities. At first, the businesses operating in the present have the accessibility to a wide variety of social media platforms. These platforms help them interact with consumers daily, which benefits brand awareness. Through interactive marketing, the business can effectively promote their brands and products, which will help them create potential customers regarding brand switching. On the other hand, Electronic

Word of Mouth is the key to efficiently implementing marketing plans. It can provide the appropriate outcomes while emphasising increased sales and revenue growth. These techniques are time-saving and cost-effective that help to generate brand value.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

Framework
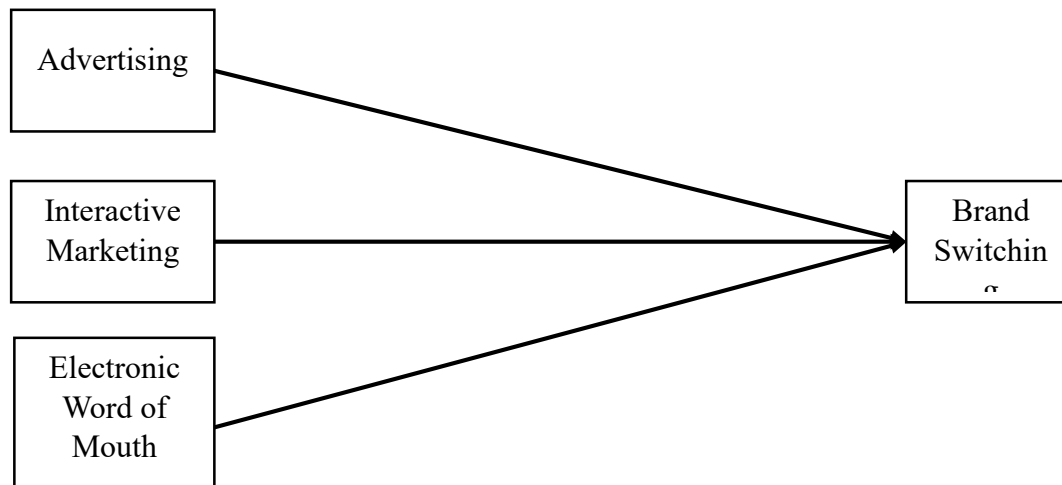
The conceptual framework is based on advertising, interactive marketing, and electronic word-of-mouth e-WOM. The reason for selecting these as the independent variable is that the above-stated factors play a vital role in social media marketing. Brands can increase their sale through effective advertisement on social media. It helps them to create potential customers by developing brand awareness. Advertising directly impacts the brand-switching decision of consumers. Moreover, the brands also use interactive marketing and e-WOM strategies as a strong market force. According to Şehirli (2021), in the present world, consumers' perception of the e-WOM and interactive marketing is an unbiased and trustworthy source. Organisations are implementing these techniques to create brand awareness while increasing the engagement of customers.

Hypothesis

The following are the hypothesis for the current study.

H1: Advertising has a significant impact on Brand switching.

H2: Interactive Marketing has a significant impact on Brand switching.

H3: Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) significantly impacts Brand switching

Methodology

The main goal of this study has been accomplished by achieving the specified research aims and objectives using the Saunders research onion. Saunders (2015) thoroughly explained each stage of the process and listed all the components in a logical order. Considering the three methods of research philosophy: interpretivism, positivism, and realism. Positivism has been chosen as the research philosophy to test the hypothesis for in-depth analysis to measure the results. This has helped the researcher to define the context regarding the topic in which the study had taken place. The selected philosophy is concerned with the environment, and the expansion of knowledge, because the researcher had to cover a wide range of data in a specific period appropriately.

Furthermore, Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) claim that this study chooses the positivist research philosophy to evaluate the interrelation among customer brand-switching decisions and social media marketing. The rationale for choosing this philosophy is that it is among the most important ones, dealing with the verifiable facts of marketing influencers and consumer purchasing patterns. The data used in this study to quantify philosophy is numerical, and conclusions are drawn from it. Alternatively, this mind set aids in handling hypotheses and examining the link between the independent and dependent variables.

Quantitative research efficiently deals with numeric data, including values and figures, which is why the researcher in this study had chosen quantitative research data. Additionally, the data gathered from the participants were incorporated into the study. The data gathered from this study had derived from a Likert Scale questionnaire with a sample size of 100 respondents, and work is being done on that data through the SPSS. The quantitative data collection helped the researcher analyze the findings more appropriately using this statistical software. In contrast, qualitative research is based on non-numeric data, which can lead to inaccurate results and findings, so the researcher did not prefer that research design.

Result and Findings

The present study used correlation analysis to analyse the relationship between the variables. A tailed t-test shows brand switching has a significant relation with other variables.

Table 1

Correlation

		Brand Switching
Interactive Marketing	Pearson Correlation	.754
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000
e-WOM	Pearson Correlation	.713**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000
Advertising	Pearson Correlation	.809**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000
Brand Switching	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	

The table represents the results of correlation analysis and shows a significant relationship between brand switching on other variables. When the interactive market was compared with brand switching, the value was 0.000, indicating high significance, followed by other variable e-WOM, advertising also represented high significance as the value was 0.000. Thus the findings of the study showed that social media marketing directly impacts brand switching and social media advertisement, interactive market, and e-WOM plays a significant role in encouraging customers to switch brand.

Conclusion

The present study explores the relationship between social media marketing and consumer brand-switching behaviour. It has been found that social media marketing or advertisement has played a vital role in creating potential customers for the sportswear brand. Effective marketing strategies help the business to increase its sales while satisfying the needs and wants of the buyers. In this regard, to analyse the research aims and objectives, the researcher opted for the SPSS software to examine the data and information collected from the participants. Moreover, the relationship between Interactive marketing and brand switching is calculated as significant. It means that interactive marketing is linked with the consumer's buying habits which means that the individual chooses to switch to another brand.

On the other hand, advertisement and e-WOM also show a significant relationship with brand switching. It has been concluded that social media marketing helps various brands reach a bigger audience. Effective marketing techniques aid the business to increase its sales while targeting potential customers while focusing on the brand switching of consumers. In this technological era, consumers are fond of using social media platforms. It is the opportunity for the brand to develop potential customers by providing them with satisfactory products at affordable prices. People get influenced by social media advertisements because these individuals find them authenticated and reliable. In the last, social media marketing offers various advantages to the business that includes brand awareness, increased customer engagement, high website traffic, and improvised ranking on search engines.

Recommendations

As the findings of the present work imply, the impact of social media marketing on brand switching can further be enhanced by considering the following aspects:

- Improving Channels: Marketing channels must be optimized and more agile in meeting customer/consumer expectations. Given the geopolitical and socioeconomic disruptions apparent in present society, social media marketing was found pivotal in providing companies with the desired platform to market their product or service effectively. As per the study by Cespedes (2021), addressing the pain points in customer preferences can significantly improve brand switching in favour of marketing companies. Familiar marketing channels must continue to provide the target audience with a personalised experience, and content must cater to diverse preferences.

- Presence: Cementing a rapport presence is a fundamental goal in social media marketing. By dynamically adjusting to consumer behaviours and purchase patterns, marketing frequencies and advertisement content can be tailored to indicate a strong, positive presence.

- Strategy: Social media marketing has enabled businesses to adopt activist positions that appeal to a variety of customers, and content tactics are essential to enhancing customer conversion. Customer engagement for firms that use social media marketing considerably rises.

- Auditing and Performance Management: By consistently monitoring the efficacy of the social media marketing strategy, companies can stay ahead of the impending opportunity

or risk of failure. Auditing customer engagements and e-WOM can reveal the impact of social media marketing on customer preference and, thus, the decision to switch.

Implications

The implications of the present research are as follows:

- The customer/consumer: Customers prefer products or services based on utility, purpose or aesthetics. The findings of the present work indicated that social media as a marketing tool could indeed augment and improve such features in the marketed/advertised product. Furthermore, social media marketing is more capable of adjusting to consumer expectations than any other channel. The associations of social media marketing with e-WOM indicated that the platform would increase product visibility.

- The brand: An agile social media marketing strategy can further enhance brand personality, image, and features. In the contemporary era, avoiding social media marketing can lead to detrimental results for the brand and even make it lose its' competitiveness.' As the world continues to shift towards digital platforms and interconnectivity increases, it is imperative that brands also revamp their marketing strategies and position themselves as highly familiar and consumer-friendly products or services.

- Marketers/Advertisers: Marketers and advertisers have long realised the potential of social media as an effective marketing tool; however, its effective usage is largely left unaddressed. To this end, considering the recommendations, the content strategy must account for consumer awareness and preference for innovative variety. The latter pertains to the cost-effective yet visibly improved product or service features indicated in the ads' content. Thus, the interaction of the marketing strategy via social media marketing can only be optimised with a rapport, appeal, and highly familiar strategy.

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