

## ROLE OF YOUTUBE IN VIRAL VIDEO MARKETING

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### **Abstract**

Majority of marketers worldwide are using internet for marketing their offerings to the worldwide audience. In this scenario, Video Marketing through YouTube has emerged as one of the most preferred medium for marketing. Viral Marketing has gained popularity in the last decade and YouTube has become the most popular tool for viral marketing. YouTube has brought revolution in the field of online sharing of videos, which makes it the most effective medium for business promotion. Viral marketing is very cost effective method of marketing and through YouTube viral marketing campaigns can reach to billions of viewers worldwide in a very short span of time. This research paper will explore the existing literature on viral marketing, benefits and challenges of viral marketing, and how viral marketing campaigns can be made more effective using YouTube. The researchers have analyzed the impact of users' age, gender and profession on sharing of different kinds of videos on YouTube. Also, the researchers have analyzed marketer's opinions and attitude about YouTube as a marketing tool. The results have been analyzed using qualitative research design with the help of a questionnaire. The findings from the research will be helpful for the marketing managers for formulating effective viral marketing campaigns by including viral marketing into the overall marketing mix.

**Keywords-** *Viral Marketing, YouTube, Marketing strategies, social media, video marketing, online marketing*

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## INTRODUCTION

Internet is changing the way business and marketing are traditionally done. The opportunities of doing business worldwide are just at the click of a mouse. Internet has several characteristics such as global reach, real time interactivity, instant feedback etc.

While the underlying principle of word-of-mouth marketing is well-established and acknowledged (Richins, 1983; Wilson, 1991), the Internet fosters new marketing strategies (Achrol and Kotler, 1999; Arnott and Bridgewater, 2002), one of which is viral marketing. At the core of this emerging form of marketing is the transmission of marketing messages through various Internet-based channels by peers. During these transmissions, information passes between individuals without the involvement of the original message source, propagating like a virus would have done, infecting the hosts.

This paper synthesizes the emerging literature on viral marketing and identifies important factors that need to be considered when organizing a viral marketing campaign. It also identifies the benefits and challenges associated with viral marketing.

## VIRAL MARKETING

Viral marketing, viral advertising, or marketing buzz are buzzwords referring to marketing techniques that use pre-existing social networks to produce increases in brand awareness or to achieve other marketing objectives (such as product sales) through self-replicating viral processes, analogous to the spread of viruses or computer viruses (memes and mimetic). The short history of viral marketing is generally agreed to have been launched by Hotmail's tag line "Get your private, free e-mail from Hotmail at <http://www.hotmail.com>" (Helm, 2000, Porter & Golan, 2006) and the resulting successful widespread diffusion of Hotmail. This tag line, added automatically to every email sent from a Hotmail account, was passed on from existing Hotmail users to the recipients of their email messages in the way that viruses spread, hence the term viral marketing. While for Welker (2002, p.7) viral marketing is nothing more than "a new interpretation of the good old word-of-mouth-paradigm", the use of the Internet for spreading the message clearly is a new concept that would not have been possible without the widespread diffusion of information and communication technologies. Messages are spread through different channels such as email, chat rooms and discussion forums. They may contain various types of content ranging from text and images, to MS PowerPoint files, Adobe's Flash animations and so

on. Recently, users found an additional channel to distribute and share their video clips online via services like YouTube. The value of such services and their potential impact as viral marketing tools were vividly demonstrated by Google’s acquisition of YouTube in 2006 for 1.65 billion US dollars (BBC, 2006a), YouTube measures the number of times a clip was viewed and the viewers’ ratings, while it allows qualitative feedback through the viewers’ comments.

**Benefits and Challenges of viral marketing**

One important benefit is that viral marketing is relatively inexpensive in comparison to many other forms of advertising and marketing campaigns. The other major benefits relate to the positive diffusion characteristics. This rapid diffusion can significantly boost the speed of the adoption of the marketed product or service. Yet, besides positive financial and diffusion implications, viral marketing makes use of peer-to-peer transmission, which is one of the most influential marketing methods available to marketers. The following points can be grouped into four categories as shown.

Category	Benefit
<b>Financial</b>	Inexpensive
<b>Diffusion speed</b>	Reaches audiences within a short period of time Rapid, fast diffusion Boosts adoption speed Exponential
<b>Peer-to-peer transmission</b>	Voluntary transmission by sender
<b>Audience reach</b>	More effective targeting Access to diverse audience through social contacts

Yet, besides these significant benefits, there are risks and challenges that marketers have to face when engaging in viral marketing campaigns. Probably the biggest challenge is the lack of control associated with viral marketing campaigns: organizations have no means of controlling the spread of the message and the content of the transmission. A lack of legal standards in terms of viral marketing is another potentially risky issue. The final risk to be considered when engaging in viral marketing campaigns is the lack of ethical standards consumers may feel

exploited, cheated, and used, and may view viral messages as an invasion of their privacy. Following table provides an overview of the risks associated with viral marketing.

Category	Challenges
<b>Lack of control</b>	Uncontrollable nature, in particular loss over content and audience reach and few possibilities to measure success Total loss of control in particular content and Timing Spam Lack of control mechanisms:
<b>Potential Negative impact</b>	Negative WOM leading to boycott, ruin, unfavorable attitudes May lead to negative perceptions of brands Negative word-of-mouth can happen
<b>Consumer dependency</b>	Consumers unwilling to provide referrals unless there is some return
<b>Lack of legal standards</b>	Emerging legal issues have to be considered
<b>Lack of Ethical standards</b>	Consumers may feel exploited, cheated, used Consumer privacy invasion

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Viral marketing is same on Internet what we have Word-of-Mouth communication offline. The name viral implies that it can take epidemic proportions if well planned. Each recipient of the message or video is a potential carrier. Word of mouth implies that informal, ad hoc communication between individuals concerning products and services (Bayus, 1985) is taking place. This communication can be positive as well as negative, depending on the satisfaction levels of the individuals (Evans et al, 2006). The behavior and views of individuals are significantly influenced by negative word of mouth communication, which tends to be weighted more heavily by consumers than positive communication (Solomon, 2004). Research has found that 90% of dissatisfied consumers do not purchase products or services of the company involved

in the negative word-of-mouth communication (Solomon, 2003). Equally importantly, these consumers will communicate their dissatisfaction to at least nine other people and 13% of these dissatisfied consumers will communicate their negative view to more than thirty people. The term “Viral Marketing” was coined by Rayport (1996) and was then made popular by Tim and Steve (1997). According to Helm, Sabrina (2000), “Viral marketing can be understood as a communication and distribution concept that relies on customers to transmit digital products via electronic mail to other potential customers in their social sphere and to animate these contacts to also transmit the products.” According to Tim and Steve (1997), for a successful viral marketing, the strategy, since inception, must include an element that is viral. However most of the viral phenomenon start, not knowing that it will become viral. Somebody creates an interesting ad, a funny e-mail or joke, a video clip, a sketch, or an incident to amuse friends or inform consumers, and sends it to someone. The receiver, getting impressed of it, sends it to others in his reference groups and like this it becomes a virus! Among Time Magazine’s list of the top 50 viral videos of all time, there are clips of animals, dancing, singing, falling, and crying (just to name a few) (Fletcher, 2010). These clips also include many different types of people. It is important to note that simply because the content of these clips seems to be different does not rule out the possibility of common elements.

Scholars argue that viral video is a new driving force of pop culture. Linkletter et al. (2009) claim the influence of online video is so strong; certain clips have persuaded people to take unhealthy risks. Burgess (2008) seeks to give meaning to these accusations by defining the parameters of a viral video. She argues that a viral video is born when user-led distribution causes a clip to become wildly popular. Furthermore, she claims that a viral video must contain some element that appeals to the popular culture of the time. Usually, this element of pop culture appeals mainly to the younger generation Rayport (1996) studied that viral marketing seeks to exploit pre-existing social networks of an individual to produce exponential increase in brand awareness, through a process similar to that of spread of an epidemic. Although the influence of viral video has been researched extensively, much less attention has been given to the elements within viral videos. However, scholars such as Fletcher (2010) and Briggs (2010) have published works analyzing the reasons behind the popularity of certain videos. Briggs (2010) published a viral video case study in which he closely analyzes the “BlendTec Will it Blend” campaign.

According to Briggs, this campaign has been wildly popular and is a useful example of the methodology behind viral videos. He explains that BlendTec has been successful in its online video endeavors because it created buzz content. He also argues that the irony of blending expensive objects in a blender is part of these videos' appeal. Burgess (2008) content surveyed a sample of 4,300 popular YouTube videos. Burgess notes that these videos are usually not traditional media content. She concludes that "oddness" and "amateurism" lead to the irony found in much of her sample size.

Another factor that scholars argue leads to the popularity certain videos is "layout." Hilderbrand (2007) argues that the site design of YouTube is much like that of television. YouTube allows the user to quickly move through videos by toggling arrow buttons. The interface also employs a large viewing area in the middle of the page. Hilderbrand argues that this quick viewing mechanism makes skimming videos easy. Users on YouTube can quickly move from video to video to find popular content. Hilderbrand also stresses the fact that many popular videos on YouTube have been aggregated from more conventional media sources. Other researchers who have focused on the creative aspects of viral videos are Southgate et al. (2010). These researchers studied 102 video ads released in the United Kingdom. Their findings suggest that the creative details behind video advertising can be used to predict a video's popularity. Like Hilderbrand (2007), Southgate et al. (2010) argue that the presentation of videos is directly related to their popularity. Specifically, Southgate et al. (2010) focus on how visual branding drives a video's proliferation. Their research specifically relates to the advertising niche for viral video. In this way, the research of Southgate et al. (2010) and Briggs (2010) is closely related. Both researchers focus on the future potential of viral video in the realm of advertising.

A portion of the preceding research on the influence of YouTube has relied on anecdotal reports. For example, Rosenberg (2010) published an article profiling a university president's experience with viral video. He argues that this college president's YouTube fame is to be expected. By using this anecdotal evidence, Rosenberg (2007) was able to explain that viral videos are often results of their environments. He suggests that videos originating in well-defined social networks (such as universities) are destined to become more popular.

Several researchers have studied the link between news proliferation and viral video. Sagan et al. (2010) argue that viral video is changing the way people get their news. They include quantitative research to track people's reliance on video to get their news. Sagan et al. (2010) suggest that a news video must also appeal to viewers in the 18-25 age groups to become widely popular. To support their findings, these researchers used evidence from the 2004 election in which online video feeds of the event received over 670 million views, mostly by younger viewers. Another researcher who has written about the newsworthiness of viral videos is (Wallsten, 2008). He suggests that the blogosphere has attributed to the rise of many viral YouTube videos. Many viral YouTube videos have ties to popular blogs and commentary.

### **ROLE OF YOUTUBE IN VIRAL MARKETING**

YouTube is “a video sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips. It was created in February 2005 by three former PayPal employees. In October 2006, Google Inc. announced that it had reached a deal to acquire the company for US\$1.65 billion in Google stock” (Wikipedia, 2005, para.1). Users can not only watch videos on the site, but also embed homemade videos to share over the world. It has quickly grown as the world's largest sharing website on the Internet. With the popular phenomenon, YouTube Corporation has already been translated into 18 versions to locate in different countries. “According to Nielsen Net Ratings, the site serves almost 13 million users a month and serves up to 50 million videos each day” (Fisher, 2006, para.1). How does YouTube make a stir over the world? The answer is the video sharing stage on the Internet. Due to the advance of technology in the 21st century, digital industries are paving a rapid way to channel all countries into a village globe. In the well-developed period, registered users can not only watch videos on YouTube, but also embed homemade videos to share over the world. With the popularity around the world, YouTube is also building an instant vessel to provide influential effects on the Internet. The trend of viral marketing through social media channels including YouTube is getting popular. “Occupy wall street movement” is an example of viral marketing. A video in YouTube, by anonymous, triggered the movement. Many videos were uploaded in Facebook, YouTube and as many as 120 Facebook pages were created in support of this movement. “India against corruption” in India by Team Anna, Rajnikanth website by webchutney.com, Vodafone ZooZos, launch of Hotmail,

and Himalaya Herbal Facebook page are also good examples of viral marketing through social media.

A recent article in The Sydney Morning Herald entitled “iPhone Subway Performance Goes Viral on YouTube” is a great example of the sometimes unlikely popularity of certain YouTube videos. Although some may not find an iPhone concert entertaining, more than 2 million people have viewed this video on YouTube. It is important to note that this iPhone video is not alone in the spotlight. According to Burgess (2008), many seemingly insignificant videos have acclaimed worldwide fame. The large audience for these clips illustrates yet a larger phenomenon in the world of viral video: the apparent unpredictability of viral success. For example, Old Spice’s recent YouTube campaign has gone viral and has improved the brand’s popularity among young consumers (Reiss, 2010). With the culture effect, moreover, YouTube brings social interaction in every way. According to Sterling (2006), when a viewer browses YouTube unconsciously they are in a social interaction environment. It will cause a connection to affect people’s behaviors even if it is just a video. Because YouTube has already become an interaction website, users are easy liable to these free contents. Members will reflect the true social activities on YouTube and showcase their opinions. They post videos, view videos, comment on videos and share videos with this power. YouTube is all about video broadcasting. Videos can even show a “talking head” touting the benefits of any product or service. Just like a TV commercial. But marketers have up to 10 minutes to make their case, not 30 seconds.

YouTube is 400 million people worldwide actively seeking information on an estimated 6 million to 9 million YouTube channels every month. As of 2009, approximately 100 million Americans watched about 6 billion videos on YouTube each month. Americans performed more than 2.9 billion searches on YouTube every month. In fact, YouTube accounted for 79% of all US visits to 60 online video sites in 2009. Social media is about monitoring and participating in the conversations about companies, products and services. And finding evangelists and influencers who can help you build your business.

Here are some things businesses marketers can do in a YouTube video, according to the book “YouTube and Video Marketing an Hour a Day” by Greg Jarboe:



- ❖ Publicize a news event about your company.
- ❖ Introduce a new product or service.
- ❖ Demonstrate a new product or service.
- ❖ Distribute a speech given by the company president, CEO or VP.
- ❖ Record celebrity endorsements of your product or service.
- ❖ Show conference presentations, exhibits and speeches.

Marketers can even advertise on YouTube. They can place their own ads on videos that match their criteria. It can be a traditional Google text ad or a video ad to the right of the video player. Or they can place the ad in the lower part of the video itself as a semi-transparent overlay while the video plays. More than 147 million US Internet users watched an average of 100 videos per viewer in January 2009.

A YouTube channel is the equivalent of a Facebook profile. The marketers create the page and put whatever they want on it. But instead of lots of text, they put lots of videos. It includes videos of all those things that businesses can do on YouTube and YouTube allows viewers to rate their videos, favorite them and share them with friends. They can also upload a video response to their videos, add comments and subscribe to channel. A TubeMogul study of the viewing of 188,055 YouTube videos found that half of the viewers stopped watching a video after only 60 seconds.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research paper is to get an insight into viral marketing as a phenomenon and thereby observing the user behavior towards sharing of videos on You Tube. The research methods used here are both exploratory and descriptive. The primary data has been collected through a survey using a questionnaire. The secondary data has been collected from various newspapers, articles, research reports and journals on this topic. Two types of surveys have been done. First survey has been done on users for which the sample size is restricted to 250 using the convenience sampling. The second survey has been done on Marketers for which the sample size is 20. The responses were collected mainly on a five point Likert Scale ranging from 1(Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree) and 1 (Most Important) to 5 (Least Important).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION-**

The following table describes respondent's profile. The respondents are 250 for the first survey, who use Internet and share videos on YouTube. Along with it 20 marketers have been included into second survey, those who are using YouTube or any other social media channels for the promotion of their business.

**TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS**

Profile	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
<b>AGE IN YEARS</b>			
25 or below	65	26.00	26.00
26-35	120	48.00	74.00
36-50	65	26.00	100
Total	250	100	
<b>GENDER</b>			
Male	160	64	64.00
Female	90	36	100
Total	250	100	
<b>PROFESSION</b>			
Student	65	26	26.00
Service	105	42	68.00
Self employed	60	24	92.00
Housewife	20	08	100
Total	250	100	

It can be analyzed from Table 1 that majority of the respondents belong to 26-35 year age group (48%), followed by 25 and below (26%) and 35-50 (26%). Gender profile indicates that 64% respondents are male while 36% respondents are female. Professional profile indicates that a large number of respondents were service professionals (42%), followed by students (26%), self employed (24%) and housewives (8%).

**RELIABILITY ANALYSIS**

Cronbach's alpha is a coefficient of reliability, which is 0.751, which indicates acceptable reliability of data.

**PROFESSION WISE ANOVA FOR SHARING OF VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE**

Null Hypothesis- There is no significant impact of the profession of a user on sharing of different kinds of videos on YouTube.

Alternate Hypothesis- There is a significant impact of the profession of a user on sharing of different kinds of videos on YouTube.

**TABLE 2: PROFESSION WISE SUMMARY OF MEANS AND ANOVA OF SHARING OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF VIDEOS**

Sharing different kind of videos on YouTube	Students N=65	Service N=105	Self employed N=60	Housewives N=20	F-value	P-Value
Comedy videos	1.44	1.58	1.86	2.99	36.45	0.00
Entertainment videos	1.28	2.43	2.70	2.00	31.22	0.01
Music videos	1.70	2.26	2.14	3.51	19.88	0.00
Horror videos	3.87	3.58	3.41	3.49	9.80	0.00
News and politics	3.76	3.13	3.88	3.99	20.70	0.00
Informational videos	1.99	1.43	1.28	1.00	20.87	0.00
Kolaveri di video	3.28	3.59	3.78	3.49	9.40	0.00

Method: Compare means, One way ANOVA, Value is significant at 5% level with degree of freedom (d.f.) = 2/250

### Findings and discussions-

The above table depicts that the highest mean score on the variable “sharing of different kinds of comedy videos” has been attained by the students (1.44), followed by service professionals (1.58) while the lowest mean score is obtained by housewives (2.99). The F-value for this factor is 36.45 which is significant at 5% level. Highest mean values of other variables like “ sharing entertainment videos” (1.28), “sharing music videos” (1.70), “Sharing Kolaveri Video” (3.28) also belongs to students category. Thus Kolaveri di video became an instant hit as it was shared by students on YouTube. This shows that, students share mainly comedy videos, entertainment videos and music videos.

Further, Respondents who are service professionals scored highest mean value for the variable “News and politics” (3.13) while on the other hand respondents who are self employed scored the highest mean value for the variable “Horror videos” (3.41).

It is also evident from the above analysis that housewives scored the highest mean value for “sharing informational videos” (1.00) so housewives share mostly informational videos. The P-value for all the above variables, i.e. Comedy videos, entertainment videos, music videos, horror videos, news and political videos, informational videos and Kolaveri di videos is less than 0.05. Thus alternate hypothesis has been accepted which shows that there is a significant impact of the profession of the users on sharing of different kinds of videos on YouTube.

### AGE WISE SUMMARY OF MEANS AND ANOVA FOR SHARING OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF VIDEOS

Null Hypothesis- There is no significant impact of age of the users on sharing of different kinds of videos on YouTube.

Alternate Hypothesis- There is a significant impact of age of the users on sharing of different kinds of videos on YouTube.

**TABLE 3: AGE WISE SUMMARY OF MEANS AND ANOVA FOR SHARING OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE**

Sharing different kind of videos on YouTube	25 or below N=65	26-35 N=120	36-50 N=65	F-value	P-value
Comedy videos	1.44	1.87	1.70	8.45	0.01
Entertainment videos	1.28	2.44	2.49	40.71	0.00
Music videos	1.70	2.44	2.15	12.35	0.00
horror videos	3.88	3.49	3.59	12.40	0.00
News and political videos	3.94	3.57	3.14	38.96	0.00
Informational videos	2.00	1.44	1.28	27.97	0.00
Kolaveri di video	3.27	3.44	3.71	20.26	0.00

Method: Compare means, One way Anova, Value is significant at 5% level with degree of freedom (d.f.) = 2/250

**Findings and discussion-**The above table shows that the highest mean score for the variable “Sharing comedy videos” (1.44) has been attained by respondents who are below the age group of 25, followed by those who are in the age group 36-50.

This same age group i.e. below 25 has scored the highest mean value for the variables “entertainment videos” (1.28), “music videos” (1.70) and Kolaveri di video (3.27). Thus people below the age group 25 are most interested in sharing comedy videos, entertainment videos, and music videos and also shared Kolaveri di video on YouTube.

It is also evident from the above analysis that respondents who belong to age group 26-35 scored the highest mean value for sharing “horror videos” (3.49).The respondents who belong to age group 36-50 scored the highest mean value for sharing “News and political videos”(3.14) and “informational videos” (1.28).The p-value for each of these variables i.e. Comedy videos, entertainment videos, music videos, horror videos, news and political videos, informational videos and kolaveri di videos is less than 0.05. Thus alternate hypothesis has been accepted which shows that there is a significant impact of the age group of the users on sharing different of kinds of videos on YouTube.

Along with this, a survey was also done on Marketers to assess their opinion about YouTube for marketing.

### You Tube Survey for Marketers

The researchers are doing a survey of all the marketers, on their opinions of utilization of YouTube and the value of YouTube for the marketing purpose. Please fill this survey out by answering the questions below by checking the opinion boxes next the questions.

Name:					
Name of the Organization:					
Gender:					
Below are questions about YouTube and use YouTube in Marketing. Please answer the questions below by putting a check in the opinion boxes to the right of each question.	Absolutely	Yes	Maybe	No	Not at all!
Do you think social media marketing is	7	8	3	2	0

important for your business?					
Do you think using YouTube can help you grow your business?	2	7	3	6	2
Do you have a positive experience using YouTube for marketing your products?	4	10	1	3	2
On the whole is YouTube an effective source for marketing?	5	11	1	2	1
Do you think using YouTube can give an increased exposure to your products and services?	8	7	3	1	1
Does using YouTube can reduce your marketing expenses?	4	9	1	3	3
Do you think use of YouTube can increase your sales?	3	5	4	4	4
Do you plan to increase your video marketing efforts through YouTube in near future?	3	5	0	8	4
Do you want to learn more about video marketing?	8	4	1	5	2
TOTALS	44	66	17	34	19

**Results from the Marketers Survey**

After reviewing all the surveys that the researchers got from the marketers, they found a positive inclination and attitude of the marketers about YouTube. Marketers seemed to be well informed about the benefits of YouTube for marketing and consider it important for the growth of their business and around 70-75% of the marketers liked and are using YouTube for promoting their business. Around 60% of the marketers polled said that YouTube can reduce their marketing costs, can increase their sales volumes and can give them increased exposure. About 40% of the marketers plan to increase their marketing efforts on YouTube in future and around 60% want to learn more about video marketing.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR THE MARKETERS TO DESIGN MORE EFFECTIVE VIRAL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS ON YOUTUBE**

Viral marketing can be useful for businesses as it incurs low cost, involves low risk and has the potential to produce quick results. Businesses can use following strategies

- Viral marketing campaign must aim at making people feel emotional.
- Select a Target group and let it spread the message.
- Plan ahead to capitalize the opportunities if the virus multiplies rapidly.
- Exploit the common motivators and behavior of the users.
- The message to be passed to the customers about a product or service should be effective and appealing.
- Be prepared to trace the queries of your audience after target group spread the information and stay connected to audience.
- Use new words in the promotional strategies or rather make it shocking. One can use the blend of two or more languages.
- Make unique videos
- Design your video for remixing.
- Create controversy and conversation.
- Use strategic tagging.
- Facilitate easy transfer of message-
- Use all Social networking sites.
- Generate opportunities to be in news.

## CONCLUSION-

Viral marketing is a low cost medium of marketing and use of YouTube for viral marketing is increasing as it is a beneficial and effective tool for marketing. Internet users in India use YouTube for sharing of different kinds of videos e.g. comedy videos, entertainment videos, informational videos, news and politics related videos. Thus the culture of sharing of different types of videos is increasing among users of all age groups and professions but especially among students and users who are below the age of 25. Thus, marketers can exploit this age group for the promotion of their products through video marketing. Marketers also have a positive attitude and inclination for video marketing through YouTube and they plan to increase their video marketing budget in the near future.

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