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A STUDY OF THE USE OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA IN DRUG ABUSE CAMPAIGN

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Abstract

Electronic media is one of the outlets for disseminating content to the general public. In Malaysia, electronic media is used in a variety of campaigns, including the Drug Abuse Campaign. The purpose of this study is to look into the use and effectiveness of electronic media in the Drug Abuse Campaign conducted by National Anti-Drugs Agency (NADA). A total of 12 informants, comprising of NADA officers from the headquarters and the state of Penang, were recruited and interviewed in depth using the purposive sampling method. The main findings of the study showed that (1) NADA Top Management Council made the majority of decisions on the use of media and communication, (2) NADA has planned an audience targeting strategy in the Drug Abuse Campaign that is in general, selective and directly to the desired audience, as well as (3) electronic media is the choice of most informants as an effective medium. Overall, electronic media is still considered important and offers numerous benefits as a means of delivering information. This platform may be improved so that its potential for assisting campaigns in the country is reinforced and broadened.

Keywords: Electronic media, drug abuse campaign, Malaysia

1. Introduction

In this modern era of globalisation, the media plays a crucial role (Hamid, 2016). It becomes a public dissemination mechanism that makes it easier for people to get information from both within and outside the world (Wahab et al., 2018). The influence of the mass media is not only about disseminating knowledge but also about shaping society's ways of thinking (Rosli et al., 2016), perceptions, societal expectations and behaviour (Wahab et al., 2017). One of the platforms of mainstream media is electronic media (Hamid, 2016). Television and radio are examples of electronic channels that play an important role in influencing consciousness (Menhas et al., 2014).

The mass media is not only important as a means of disseminating information, but it also plays an important role in the implementation of campaigns in a country. For example, over the past several decades, media campaigns have been used to influence public health behaviours, such as campaigns on alcohol and illicit drug use, heart disease prevention, cancer screening and prevention, sex-related behaviours, and a variety of other health-related issues (Wakefield et al., 2010). Traditional media channels such as television, radio, cinema, newspapers, magazines, and billboard can be used in mass media campaigns, as well as new digital media such as websites, pop-up advertisements, banner ads, QR codes (Quick Response), viral marketing, and social media (Stead et al., 2019). In fact, the use of social networking sites as campaign communication tools is also becoming more popular (Namkoong et al., 2018).

Besides, media is the most potent weapon for propagating a campaign, with its role including reducing fear sentiments in the general public (Latif et al., 2020). Campaigns use mass media to inform, persuade, or motivate large groups of people to change their behaviour (Bauman et al., 2006). Traditional and online media, as well as interactive and social media, provide opportunities to both educate and influence audiences (Balint & Bilandzic, 2017). This platform is seen as successful in persuading the community to join in the campaign through mass media exposure (Hamid, 2016).

In Malaysia, there are a variety of media-based health awareness programme (Jamri et al., 2017). The Drug Abuse Campaign is one of them, and it uses the media as a means of disseminating information. Electronic media, print media, social media, and outdoor media are among the types of media used in this campaign series (Agensi Antidadah Kebangsaan Kementerian Dalam Negeri, 2016).

1.1. Strategic Communication Model

The Strategic Communication Model serves as a guide throughout the research process in this study. Deborah J. Barret was the driving force behind the creation of this model in 2002, with the Strategic Employee Communication Model serving as the foundation. A strategic communication plan's purpose is to integrate all organisational programmes, including public education and advocacy efforts (Mahbob et al., 2019). The Drug Abuse Campaign refers to the government's advocacy effort, which is carried out through NADA, in order to tackle the country's drug abuse problem.

Based on the nature of strategic communication, which encompasses a wide range of aspects, this study tries to reduce the scope by focusing on three primary viewpoints, namely the planning, implementation, and assessment of communication in the Drug Abuse Campaign. This is because effective communication is based on the study's findings and is achieved through precise preparation, cautious

implementation, and ongoing review (Mahbob et al., 2019). Evaluation is the foundation for determining whether an organization's use of communication satisfies its mission, strategy, and accomplishments (Buhmann & Likely, 2018).

In summary, communication planning entails developing agendas and essential plans for the short, medium, and long term. Communication implementation entails carrying out communication strategies that have been planned in several steps, such as setting objectives, selecting target audiences, and employing communication tools and channels. Meanwhile, communication evaluation entails making adjustments to communication techniques that will be used in the future (Mahbob et al., 2019). From the beginning stages of campaign design through the final stages of campaign evaluation, the strengths and weaknesses of the existing Drug Abuse Campaign can be analysed holistically through these three focused views. The Drug Abuse Campaign can thus be improved over time in this manner.

2. Problem Statement

Although the use of media has become part of preventive interventions to resolve the country's drug abuse issue through campaign, studies to explore the use and effectiveness of media, especially electronic media, are very restricted.

3. Research Questions

3.1. To what extent is the use and effectiveness of electronic media in the Drug Abuse Campaign?

4. Purpose of the Study

The goal of this study is to explore the use and effectiveness of electronic media in Drug Abuse Campaign.

5. Research Methods

This is a research study that is exploratory in nature. Hussin et al. (2014) explained that (1) the goal of this research was to get a deeper understanding of phenomena, generate new ideas, and expand knowledge about them (researchers gain a better understanding), (2) carried out on the basis of a small number of investigations undertaken for reference purposes in order to collect information (researchers lack information), (3) the goal of this study is to obtain understanding and familiarity with a subject in order to conduct more in-depth research in the future, as well as (4) entails the investigation of a topic or scenario that offers the researcher with a better understanding.

In order to acquire research data, qualitative procedures which is in-depth interviews are used. The primary purpose of conducting in-depth interviews is to acquire rich data in order to gain a better knowledge of the context, case, or phenomena (Minikel-Lacocque, 2019). When there is a need to explore experiences, perspectives, and other sensitive subjects that may not be revealed by merely answering a list of questions in a set of organised questionnaires, interviews can be quite beneficial (Minhat, 2015). Although in-depth

interviews should preferably be performed in person, they can also be conducted over the phone, Skype, or even email (Morris, 2015).

A total of 12 informants were recruited through a purposive sampling approach designed for in-depth interview sessions, comprising of NADA Officers at the central level and in the state of Penang. The purposive sampling method is employed because the recruited informants must have experience in media management and communication in the NADA Drug Abuse Campaign.

In the meantime, in terms of total sample size, the number of informants interviewed has already reached saturation in terms of responses provided. This is compatible with the interview method, which permits a study's results to achieve a level of data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The term "saturation" refers to the moment at which the data collecting process no longer reaches fresh or more relevant data (Dworkin, 2012).

In terms of instruments, it is separated into three sections namely (1) demographic background, (2) media use, and (3) use and effectiveness of media techniques in general. Three experts from the domains of media and communication, as well as drug use, have previously assessed the instrument. Thematic Analysis is a method used to analyse qualitative data. The results of this study are presented in a descriptive manner as a result of the analysis that was performed.

6. Findings

In terms of demographics, the study's findings revealed that 8 of the 12 informants who participated in the in-depth interview session were male, while 4 were female. Seven of the informants are in their forties, while the other five are in their thirties. Furthermore, the majority of informants interviewed, a total of nine people, have worked with NADA for more than ten years. Half of the overall informants are those who hold the rank of Officer, which totals six people, with the remaining six people holding positions as Assistant Officers and Senior Officers.

6.1. Communication Planning

In general, the NADA's communication strategy, as stated by Informant 4, is based on its own media plan, where the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets to be attained at the federal and state levels would be determined for each year. For example, the quantity of television and radio advertising aired, as well as the creation of new campaign materials.

"If we follow our strategy, there is a media plan. There are KPIs we need to implement every year. How much airtime is needed on television? At HQ itself, there are KPIs. The same goes for the state level." (Informant 4)

In addition, the communication strategy carried out by the NADA reported by Informant 6 has three main purposes, namely to (1) protect, (2) deter an individual from initiating an act of drug abuse and (3) intervention.

"The goal of this prevention is to safeguard, delay the start of the process, and also to intervene." (Informant 6)

In this communication planning, the NADA Top Management Council plays a crucial role. One of the most essential decisions they must make is the selection and determination of the media to be employed. They will make a decision based on the results of the needs analysis. According to Informant 7, a quick needs analysis will be carried out initially at the district and state levels via a survey. This is regarded as a crucial subject that must be completed in order to receive information on the suitable media to employ.

"The selection must come from the top management". (Informant 4)

"Needs analysis. A quick study of districts and states to find out what media we can use. We are not just campaigning in the city, but also outside of it. They still require conventional media." (Informant 7)

Despite the fact that top management makes the majority of decisions, the NADA maintains a bottom-up strategy. In this case, some informants reported that the spaces of view, which are through the contribution of advisory services, ideas, and suggestions from officials, are still present and given from the perspective of planning matters concerning public awareness where top management acts to provide feedback. If it is reasonable to consider, the top management will not hesitate to embrace it.

"Top Management must make a decision. We will, however, offer advise. Top Management will sometimes accept if we can rationalise." (Informant 7)

NADA also has a communication strategy in terms of audience targeting tactics. According to Informant 1, the NADA has three categories of target audiences in the general campaign, including (1) general (30 million people in the country), (2) selective (individuals or specific groups), and (3) indicated (straight to the target necessary). The first target audience is the community. According to Informant 11, the purpose of community empowerment programmes that target community leaders and the community itself is not only to provide knowledge about their obligations, but also to provide awareness for the community to act and move on their own to conduct the programme.

"There are three types of target audiences. The first refers to the country's 30 million citizens." (Informant 1)

"We are still working on community empowerment. We want the community to drive the programme and understand their roles." (Informant 11)

For the second audience, it refers to a specific individual or group. In this case, the informants gave numerous distinct perspectives on this target audience, stating that NADA targets adolescents, youth, parents, and teachers.

"Selective refers to a specific person." (Informant 1)

"We want to focus on adolescent, said the group. We must also pay attention to parents. We must also keep an eye on the teachers." (Informant 10)

Informant 8 revealed that NADA adheres to the prevention concept, which states that prevention must begin at a young age, before drug abuse develops. In terms of youths, Informant 2 stated that this group was given special attention due to the high prevalence of drug abuse, as evidenced by NADA figures, and this appears to be the current trend. Parents are not an exception when it comes to being an important target audience for NADA. Informant 6 stated that preventative education should begin at home because parents shape their children. This was backed up by Informant 12, who underlined the principle of 'Prevention Begins at Home'.

"If we follow the preventative concept, we must begin prevention at a young age, before drug abuse occurs. At the age of ten, for example, a substance abuse act happens. Therefore, prevention must begin at the age of nine." (Informant 8)

"We usually concentrate on youth because, according to our data, youth account for the majority of drug addicts." (Informant 2)

"Home is where prevention begins. Therefore, it is the parents' obligation." (Informant 12)

In the case of the third audience, it relates directly to the desired audience. According to Informant 1, it is toward NADA's focus on people who are directly or indirectly associated with the problem of drug abuse.

"The indicated one are those who immediately NADA go." (Informant 1)

This strategy can be used to plan media usage based on the target audience. In the context of electronic media, for example, the NADA intends to tailor this media to the targeted audience.

6.2. Communication Implementation

Electronic media was one of the medium mentioned by most informants as being used by NADA in the promotion of the Drug Abuse Campaign. Television and radio are two examples of electronic media mentioned by the interviewees.

"Print media, face-to-face medium, electronic media, new media, outdoor media." (Informant 4)

"We make use of five different media outlets. Electronic media, social media, face-to-face media such as exhibitions, print media, and outdoor media such as billboards." (Informant 7)

Furthermore, the employment of radio with its own listeners is viewed as a chance to communicate information about the dangers of drug abuse to the chosen target demographic. Informant 1 provides an example of a radio station with listeners based on race. In this situation, the NADA took advantage of the chance to incorporate commercials about the danger of drug abuse that would be broadcast at specific times. In fact, Informant 8 stated that the NADA undertook media and communication strategies based on the target audience in 2016 and 2017 where the slogan 'Prevention Starts at Home' targeting parents led to the usage of media that is commonly associated with this group such as radio. Sinar FM and THR stations were selected as the medium for disseminating information about the danger of drug abuse at the time.

"Hot FM is popular among Malays. We take use of the chance to run advertisements at specific periods." (Informant 1)

"We wish to spread the message of drug prevention beginning at home. As a result, we employ the media that the parents use. For instance, we placed an advertisement on Sinar radio." (Informant 8)

Furthermore, information on the dangers of drug abuse is presented based on time slots gained on television and radio. Among the slots gained by NADA are those on Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) for Selamat Pagi Malaysia, TV Al-Hijrah, and talk shows on television. Meanwhile, in the context of radio, the English-language radio station TraXX FM is one of the radios that has broadcast information on the danger of drug abuse. In fact, NADA HQ urges NADA at the state level to collaborate with the Information Department in each state, Radio Televisyen Malaysia at the state level, and radios other than RTM. Informant 3 also mentioned public service announcements (PSA) and jingles as further ways to use electronic media as a medium of information distribution.

"Electronic media, radio and television, advertising, jingle, PSA." (Informant 3)

"We receive slots on television. On Al-Hijrah TV, RTM Selamat Pagi Malaysia, or the Talk Show, for instance. Then it was time for the radio. We encourage NADA to work with Radio Televisyen Malaysia, the state information agency, and other radio stations in each state. TraXX FM. We used to broadcast on TraXX FM, an English-language radio station." (Informant 9)

6.3. Communication Evaluation

In terms of communication evaluation, it is implemented by the NADA. The findings of the in-depth interviews conducted show that electronic media is the choice of most informants as an effective medium.

"The use of the radio has shown to be highly successful for me. It's light, soothing, and well-suited to the souls of people from many walks of life. There are slots available for teenagers, seniors, and even children. As a result, this radio will quickly attached to memory. I believe that using radio is quite effective. For the time being, it is extremely affordable. However, if used on a wide scale, it is ideal. Because everywhere has a radio, every house has a radio, and there is a radio everywhere. As a result, we interact with the radio medium." (Informant 1)

"People are more likely to notice this paid one. More efficient. Because if you want to acquire slot on prime time television, you'll have to pay a lot of money. We notice the most recent trends, and if the rating is high, the effect is visible to a large number of people." (Informant 3)

"Okay, if we look at radio as an electronic medium, it is quite good. Because people who drive automobiles spend more time with the radio, this is the explanation. People do, in fact, listen to the radio." (Informant 5)

Internal assessments were also made, according to Informants 1 and 2, by monitoring current developments and achievements (such as the rate of increase in the number of or access to media such as radio and electronic media) as well as ongoing improvements.

"So far, I've noticed that at meetings, bosses would inquire about progress, improvements, and accomplishments at all levels. For instance, how many hits have you had on the radio?" (Informant 1)

According to Informants 1, 3, 4, and 8, NADA performed a survey of media and communication access rates in the Drug Abuse Campaign through procurement from publishing businesses including TV3 and Radio Televisyen Malaysia, the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia, and Nielsen audits. According to Informant 4, the purpose of this survey was to determine and investigate the frequency of viewing or the number of listeners for a commercial on the danger of drug abuse.

"We also make an effort to obtain access rates from the firms who produce this material. Rate of listener reach. Get it from Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia." (Informant 1)

"Nielsen audits track how many frequencies are listened to or seen." (Informant 4)

The NADA also performed evaluations based on public comments. The majority of informants (Informant 7, Informant 8, Informant 10, Informant 11, and Informant 12) indicated positive response from the surveyed audience, including youngsters and teachers. Informant 8 provided an example, citing the highly positive comments received as a result of the airing of seven mini-episodes promoting the danger of drug abuse on various platforms, including electronic media. This is supported by a statement from Informant 10 about the community's reaction, which stated that the acting of child actress Mia Sara, who

starred in the campaign, was also regarded effective. Furthermore, Informant 12 stated that he had received feedback on the sentiments of dread experienced by members of the community, as well as the awareness gained from those polled as a result of the adverts that were aired.

"Our advertisements have also received a lot of positive feedback." (Informant 7)

"We had some pretty positive responses as the campaign continued. Because we run these advertising on a variety of platforms. We received a lot of positive feedback." (Informant 8)

"I once polled the young, my friends, and teachers for their thoughts. I received feedback on the effective use of media in the campaign." (Informant 11)

6.4. Discussion

The study's findings indicate that the NADA is running a well-organized Drug Abuse Campaign. The Drug Abuse Campaign referred to by the researcher was carried out in good condition based on the three implementation phases of the advocacy programme, including communication planning, communication implementation, and communication evaluation.

One of the outcomes of the in-depth interviews was that the NADA Top Management Council made the majority of decisions on the use of media and communication, which was corroborated by the needs analysis. The Top Management Council also allows officers to express their opinions. It is undeniable that before implementing an effective media strategy, certain steps will be followed, beginning with information collection and analysis, and then the information analysed will lead to medium selection, target audience, and message to be communicated to on a selected target audience (Arul, 2013). The same is true in the advertising process, where the issue of media planning and selection is unavoidable because advertisers have a range of media to choose from, ranging from traditional or mainstream media to alternative media (Michael et al., 2014). Understanding the motivations behind media selection decisions is critical for anyone involved in national advertising planning (King et al., 2004). This is especially true in the context of health information delivery, where one of the most critical strategic considerations is the medium of communication to be used (Bannor et al., 2017). Therefore, it is critical for NADA's senior management to investigate and consider the many types of existing media, including electronic media, before making a decision, because this decision concerns national advertising that will be seen by people from all walks of life. This is vital and required in order to ensure that the judgments that will be taken later have been properly evaluated through the analysis.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that the NADA has planned an audience targeting strategy in the Drug Abuse Campaign that is in general, selective and directly to the desired audience. In terms of the community, the researcher believes that it is in the NADA's best interests to target this group as a preventive intervention in general, in addition to encouraging healthy living behaviours among the community. This is due to the fact that drug abuse is a widespread problem in both rural and urban regions (Malick, 2018). Communities have enormous hurdles in tackling substance abuse and other health behavioural issues (Chinman et al., 2005). According to the findings of a study conducted by Johnson et al. (2007), in order to combat the use of permitted retail products for delusional reasons among youth, community preventive interventions are required. In a research conducted by Wu et al. (2002), they also stated that community

interventions have been shown to be useful for health issues such as smoking problem. Therefore, NADA's decision to make the community the target audience is recognised as sensible.

In terms of youth, the researcher believes that NADA's designation of this group as the target audience is critical because they are the people who will shape the country's future. In every country, young people are a vital human resource (Sunitha & Gururaj, 2014). However, drug and alcohol abuse is already widespread among young people (Leslie, 2008). Many of these young people will lose their lives to drugs and alcohol, and this number will continue to rise, making them problem drug users (Chakravarthy et al., 2013). According to Wandersman and Florin (2003), the status of youth problems with alcohol, smoking, drug abuse, aggression, and delinquency, as well as mental illness, is influenced by the family, school, and community systems. Therefore, NADA's focus on this group as the campaign's target audience is critical in reducing and curbing the problem of drug abuse among this group.

In terms of adolescence, Das et al. (2016) explained in a study that adolescence is recognised as a period for the onset of behaviours (unhealthy behaviours such as smoking and drug abuse frequently begin during adolescence) that not only affect limited health at the time, but also lead to disorders during adulthood as well as a major public health challenge due to increased morbidity and mortality. This is consistent with Griffin and Botvin's (2010) statement that students in lower and secondary levels are normally the most targeted in prevention efforts because early adolescence is the time of life when drug use experimentation often begin. Researchers view NADA's decision to make adolescence the target demographic as a favourable thing in this situation through the campaign's usage of communication tactics. Pei et al. (2019) discovered that mass media and social media have a high capacity to impact the trajectory (path) of adolescence behaviour.

In terms of parents, it is also seen to have a substantial influence on adolescent drug usage (Kung & Farrell, 2000). According to research, interventions in parenting styles aimed at at-risk populations have a good influence on children (Eslami-Shahrbabaki & Iranpour, 2016). Furthermore, Stephenson and Quick (2005) discovered in their study that parenting anti-drug advertising exhibited in national campaigns promotes the necessity of parenting techniques such as parental monitoring and talking to children about drugs. Therefore, researchers believe that NADA's decision to make parents the target audience is critical since they may help prevent drug abuse among children.

When it comes to people who are directly or indirectly associated with the issue of drug abuse, one of the parties that researchers frequently consider as extremely synonymous is the family. According to Yang et al. (2013), family involvement is critical in order to regulate the use of substances (prohibited substances) and boost the rate of recovery. Families can play an important role in prevention and recovery (Copello et al., 2005). Daley (2013) asserts that families can help people they care about in a variety of ways, including (1) assisting in the treatment of family members who have a problem with substance abuse (substance use disorder), (2) attend sessions together to address material disturbance issues and rehabilitation needs, (3) engage in continuing discussions about what can and cannot be done to assist family members with substance abuse problems, (4) recognise early indicators of relapse that their loved ones may overlook, as well as (5) aiding family members with substance abuse problems by re-stabilizing them in the case of a recurrence. Based on these findings, the researcher contends that NADA's targeting

of this audience is also acceptable as an auxiliary agent in lowering the existing problem of drug abuse among family members and those closest to them.

Besides, in the context of the audience targeting approach implemented, the NADA has adapted it to the medium chosen for use, including electronic media. According to Nkanunye and Obiechina (2017), multiple communication tools are frequently employed as part of an efficient communication plan and must achieve its goal. The informants believe that the electronic media, specifically radio, can be targeted based on race and parent group for the campaign. Previous research on public health, namely HIV/AIDS, have identified electronic media such as radio as one of the strategies of communicating to the public about HIV/AIDS prevention measures through advertising in AIDS campaigns (Adibe et al., 2010). There is a study conducted by Surkan et al. (2003) on the impact of radio advertising on alcohol consumption habits among underage, where the goal of such advertising is to urge parents to talk to their children about alcohol before their children run into issues. The study's findings clearly demonstrated that respondents who remembered the radio advertisement reported having three or more chats with their children. Based on the outcomes of this study, it is obvious that using radio to target specific audiences such as parents in public health advertising has the potential and effectiveness on this group.

Furthermore, most informants identified electronic media as an effective channel of information distribution, according to the findings of the in-depth interviews. In terms of international research results, the electronic media also has its own potential. According to the results of a study conducted by Michael et al. (2014) among advertising practitioners in Nigeria, 32 percent of respondents selected radio as their primary advertising medium. Moreover, the study's findings show that radio is the most commonly used advertisement medium in Nigeria by advertising practitioners for advertising campaigns, reinforcing the belief of some scholars and advertising practitioners that radio is the most prominent mass media in developing countries.

In addition, while looking at the success of communication techniques from the public's perspective, NADA received a lot of positive comments from community members on the effectiveness of communication strategies in the Drug Abuse Campaign. Feedback is defined as information offered by agents (teachers, peers, parents, self, experience) about features of a presentation or understanding of something (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Besides, feedback is personal information based on direct observations collected and conveyed so that recipients can use that information to maximise their potential (Jug et al., 2018). Feedback is an important aspect in establishing whether something is being done in the right direction or whether it needs to be corrected (Hardavella et al., 2017). Based on the positive feedback NADA has received on the effectiveness of communication techniques used in its campaigns, it indicates a success in terms of delivering information to community members, as well as allowing it to improve existing strategies.

The study's findings also clearly reveal that NADA conducted a survey of media and communication access rates in the Drug Abuse Campaign. It is created by companies that measure audiences, and the data is used by the media and advertisers to calculate advertising rates, analyse media content performance, as well as build and evaluate appropriate strategies for content creation and placement (Napoli, 2011). The NADA will be able to determine the extent to which the number of community members who have been

reached for a certain information or advertising distributed, therefore growing it from time to time through planned communication methods.

7. Conclusion

Overall, the employment of electronic media as one of the information distribution channels in the Drug Abuse Campaign remains suitable and relevant to the contemporary situation. The benefits of this platform should be enhanced so that it can continue to support existing campaigns. In order to strengthen the campaign, improvements in terms of media usage patterns and innovation can be continued.

Furthermore, this research makes a substantial contribution to the field of public relations and health by adding to existing knowledge. The results of this study show that, despite the fact that communication technology is rapidly evolving, traditional media, such as electronic media, can still be useful in assisting campaigns in delivering information to the public. This study can also be used by other stakeholders as a reference and guidance for identifying new features that can be implemented into electronic media platforms to improve their efficacy. The findings of this study may also be used by future researchers to broaden the scope of present studies.

Acknowledgments

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