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Passion Transfer in Sports Advertising: Sports Passion and Attitude toward Advertising

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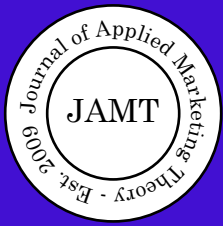


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ABSTRACT

In order to retain advertising clients, media companies are in search of viable strategies that can justify the high costs of advertising fees within the sports setting. In acknowledging the significance of advertising during sport programs, the current study seeks to investigate the value of sports advertising by introducing the concept of 'passion transfer' (i.e., the transference of high likability levels of sport programs to the sport programs' advertisements). We examine this concept by analyzing the relationship between viewer passion towards programming and advertising effectiveness. In doing so, the study also lends support to the notion of incorporating emotional measures as sustainable advertising effectiveness measures. An online survey of US adults (n=993) was administered. Findings of the study demonstrate a positive relationship between sports passion and attitude toward advertising (Aad). Furthermore, the findings suggest a significant relationship between demographics and Aad, and cross-media behaviors and Aad.

INTRODUCTION

Due to an ever-growing interest in the sports industry, sports broadcasting has obtained a prominent role in the advertising industry. Because of its market-specific characteristics and high levels of demand, the sports industry has created increased levels of competition among media companies for sports rights fees (Hoehn and Lancefield, 2003). Consequently, in having such competition, sport media rights fees have continued to escalate (Evens and Lefever, 2011). For example, within the last decade, media rights fees have increased over 900 percent for the World Cup alone (Hoehn and Lancefield, 2003). Major League Baseball now charges \$1.55 billion per season in media rights, while the NFL recently sold its media rights for a combined \$6 billion per year (Ourand, 2012). Accordingly, in an attempt to mitigate the situation, media companies are looking to find ways in which they can counterbalance these costs.

Of the many ways media companies can counterbalance the costs of media rights fees, media companies can choose to increase advertising fees. That is, as media companies are charged with escalating sports media rights fees themselves, so too will these media companies charge higher advertising fees to advertisers during sports programs. As a result, advertisers are faced with the

decision as to whether they should continue to advertise within the sport setting amidst the high costs. In order to retain advertising clients, media companies are therefore in search of a viable proposition that may justify the high costs of advertising fees within the sports setting. In acknowledging the significance of advertising during sport programs, the current study seeks to investigate the value of sports advertising by introducing the concept of 'passion transfer'.

Sports are noted for their heavily passionate fan bases. The question that remains for the sports industry, however, is whether or not fan passion is related to increased advertising value. Several scholars have noted a direct relationship between program engagement and advertising effectiveness (Lin and Cho, 2010; Llyod and Clancy, 1991). The current study's focus on sports, therefore, presents an intriguing specific context for advertisers. That is, in having passion towards a program - in this instance, the high likability levels towards sport programs - consumers will convey equal levels of passion towards the program's associated advertisements. The current study therefore labels this notion as 'passion transfer', as it denotes sport's ability to transfer a rare sense of passion towards sport programs to the program's associated advertisements.

Within the advertising industry, there has been a recent trend to measure program engagement, typically using mostly cognitive measures (Steinberg, 2010). Yet, scholars argue for the use of more traditional cognitive factors such as 'recall' or 'main point message' (Bergkvist and Rossiter, 2008; Haley and Baldinger, 2000). In contrast, our study seeks to examine the relationship between viewer passion towards programming and advertising effectiveness. The relationship between passion for programming and advertising effectiveness could have implications for including emotional and/or affective measures of program engagement in addition to cognitive measures.

Due to the dynamic nature of sport, the sport industry has the ability to be consumed in a variety of ways. Besides television, sport can be consumed through the radio, internet, smart phones, or through other mediums. Rather than considering this array of mediums as a hindrance for advertising effectiveness, we highlight the value in consumers using several mediums to obtain marketing initiatives (cross-media consumption). Furthermore, due to a wide array of consumers in the sports industry (Bennett and Lachowetz, 2004; Stevens et al., 2005), we also take into account the importance of demographics and the relationship they form with the attitude towards the ad construct.

RELEVANT LITERATURE

Attitude towards the Ad

Advertising is a pervasive aspect of both sports, and modern life. Consumers are continuously exposed to advertisements from a variety of media, including print media, television, and the internet. Not only has the number of advertisements increased in recent years, but the number of media vehicles carrying advertisements has increased as well (O'Guinn et al., 2011; Shavitt et al., 1998). With such an overwhelming volume of advertisements, advertisers are therefore held with the task of enhancing consumer attitudes towards their ads.

Both advertising industries and researchers alike are interested in the effect of attitude towards advertisements (Brown and Stayman, 1992; Gardner, 1985; Homer, 1990). The concept has been extensively researched and has been linked with a number of factors related to advertising effectiveness (Chen and Wells, 1999; Mackenzie et al., 1986; Mehta, 2000; Tsang et al., 2004). Moreover, attitudes towards advertising may be particularly noteworthy because of its influence towards attitudes-toward-the ad (Aad), a significant antecedent of advertising effectiveness, brand loyalty, and brand attitudes (Mittal, 1994; Sandage and Leckenby, 1980; Shavitt et al., 1998). According to MacKenzie et al. (1986) attitude toward the ad is defined as "a predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner to a particular stimulus during a particular exposure occasion" (pp.130-131).

Due to its strong relevance to advertisers, coupled with its theoretical implications towards a variety of other marketing attributes, attitude toward the ad has generated considerable research in the sport management field. Research shows Aad being affected by exposure levels (Biehal et al., 1992;

Burke and Edell, 1986), brand processing (Madden et al., 1988; Homer, 1990), and message involvement (Lin and Cho, 2010; Park and Young, 1986). Furthermore, Aad has also been found to be correlated with attitude towards the brand (AB) (Homer, 1990; Mitchell, 1986; Stayman and Aaker, 1988), the likelihood a brand is considered (Biehal et al., 1992), ad recall (MacKenzie et al., 1986), and purchase intentions (Glass, 2007; Haley and Baldinger, 2000; MacKenzie et al., 1986). In acknowledging the importance of the Aad construct, we seek to further examine its nature, using a variety of factors prevalent to the sports setting.

Aad and demographics

As the aforementioned literature alludes to, advertising scholars seem to treat attitude towards the ad as an overall reflection towards the entire population. Nevertheless, research suggests a correlation between attitude towards the ad and demographics (Dutta-Bergman, 2006; Bush et al., 1999). For example, Shavitt et al. (1998) revealed men are more likely to have positive attitudes towards advertisements than women. Additionally, their results reveal men are less likely to be offended by certain advertisements and are more inclined to psychologically standardize an advertisement towards their personal liking. Shavitt et al. (1998) also suggest women are more likely to support a type of governmental regulation towards advertising, while men are less inclined to seek such a regulation. According to Dutta and Young (1999) this inclination towards regulation may stem from a female tendency to be more responsible, and more concerned with social good than their male counterparts. Furthermore, in concern to the differences in advertisement reception amongst men and women, studies have shown males are more likely to purchase items in response to direct-response advertising (Shavitt et al., 1999).

Shavitt et al. (1999) also show other demographics being significant towards influencing attitude towards the ad. Their study suggests individuals with lower levels of education were more likely to enjoy advertisements, and were more likely to rely on it for purchasing decisions in comparison to individuals with higher levels of education. Shavitt et al. (1999) suggest a similar pattern emerges amongst consumers with lower income; where individuals with low levels of income enjoy advertising more, and have a tendency to be less offended by advertising. In concern to age, younger respondents are more likely than older respondents to have more positive attitudes towards advertising. Additionally, younger respondents were also found to be less offended by advertisements, and were less likely to be misled by advertisements (Alwitt and Prabhakar, 1992). Similar to the comparison of males and females, older respondents were more likely to support a governmental type regulation on advertising, signifying a more negative demeanor towards advertising (Alwitt and Prabhakar, 1992). Still, in a more recent study, Dutta-Bergman (2006) found older individuals to rely on advertising for consumption decisions more so than did younger individuals. Needless to say, advertisers must be well aware of the demographics they target. Sport, in having such a wide array of program options, lends itself to the consumption of a multitude of different demographics. It is therefore important to understand the relationship between demographics and advertisements, particularly in the sports setting. In acknowledging the abovementioned literature, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Demographics will be significantly related to the Aad construct.

Cross-Media Consumption

Though sport is unique in its ability to offer a number of programs to a variety of demographics, sport is also unique in its ability to offer content through a multitude of mediums in a synergistic fashion. Several scholars propose synergy to be an important aspect of the marketing and advertising literature (Naik and Raman, 2003; Schultz 2005). Synergy takes place when a number of different marketing communications come together to form a marketing campaign that succeeds the sum of the individual marketing communication efforts together. According to Voorveld et al. (2011), synergy “may even be...the ultimate goal of most marketing communication campaigns.” (pp. 69).

To enhance the effects of synergy, and to exercise the concept to its full degree, marketers employ the use of several different media outlets to attract consumers to a single campaign. Consumers

therefore engage in the use of several different media outlets to consume a single product/marketing campaign; this is known as cross-media consumption (Naik and Raman, 2003).

Convergence versus cannibalization

While the idea of multiple media source consumption has been recognized through literature, there is still a concern that additional media outlets will overtake a consumer's consideration for original media outlets. That is, in using a second medium to consume a marketing message, marketers are concerned their original message will not garner enough attention, and will be overshadowed by the addition of other mediums. This is the case of cannibalization versus convergence. According to Enoch and Johnson (2010),

“With cannibalization, we ask, do new media grow at the expense of traditional media or is there some other way that both behaviors can flourish? To what degree does a new medium begin to serve the functions of a traditional medium or do the uses of one somehow remain distinct from the other?...With convergence, we ask, are people now using more than one medium?” (pp.127).

In concern to this conflict, Enoch and Johnson (2010) suggest consumers are likely to converge with several media outlets, rather than concentrating on a single outlet. That is, one medium will not cannibalize other mediums, but instead, viewers will take part in following several mediums at once. To further this point, Enoch and Johnson (2010) analyzed Nielsen's Convergence Panel and found that individuals who were the heaviest users of television were also the heaviest users of the internet. The study also found the opposite, that individuals who were the heaviest internet users were also the heaviest users of television. Furthermore, within the study, Enoch and Johnson (2010) found that additional media usage (i.e., radio, smart phone, etc.) had no effect on the amount of internet or television usage. All of Enoch and Johnson's (2010) findings congregate around a general conclusion: that the usage of additional mediums does not cannibalize other outlets of media.

Antecedents and consequences of cross-media consumption

While the previous literature lends itself to the value of cross-media consumption, it is still necessary to understand why cross-media consumption occurs, along with understanding the consequences for what happens when cross-media consumption does occur. Voorveld et al. (2011) have identified two psychological processes that underlie the reasoning for consumers to interact with multiple media outlets simultaneously in comparison to interacting with a single media outlet: forward encoding and multiple source perception. Forward encoding takes place when an advertisement within the first medium stimulates the consumer's interest towards an advertisement in another (second) medium. This interest therefore stimulates a psychological desire for the second advertisement. That is, the first advertisement serves as a manipulative to arouse interest in the second medium's advertisements. Voorveld et al. (2011) suggest forward encoding both leads to consumer interest in a second medium's content, and furthermore results in motivation to process the second medium's content.

Voorveld et al. (2011) also advocate that multiple source perception accounts for why consumers interact with multiple media outlets. Multiple source perception alludes to the fact that an advertising message with several different sources enables the message to become more credible. In accordance with this information, literature suggests consumers infer a sense of brand quality from advertising repetition (Batra and Ray, 1986). Thus, as consumers see advertisements from a multitude of different sources, they are inclined to give credibility to the message's endorser.

In recognizing the relevance of cross-media consumption, sport marketers can understand how cross-media consumption can be beneficial, as consumers can utilize several different mediums to attract viewers to a single product. For example, interest in a sports team on television will likely lead to interest in the aforementioned team's website. Furthermore, such interest in the team through

television and the internet can sway the consumer towards downloading applications through the use of smart phones or tablets.

Such examples are not unrealistic. According to Moorman et al.'s (2007) investigation on cross-media usage, viewers of television who were highly involved with a program had strong motivations to visit the program's website. According to the study, these individuals were motivated to process detailed program-related information about the program through the website. Furthermore, Lin and Cho's (2010) study on cross-media behavior found a positive relationship between television program involvement and frequency of visits towards the program's website.

Literature also suggests consumers are likely to transfer their brand loyalty from one medium to another (Lin and Cho, 2010). For example, Wang et al. (2006) suggest consumers will transfer their brand loyalty from a preferred TV program to the program's associated website. Additionally, Lin and Cho's (2010) study also found a relationship between the frequency of visits to a television program's website and loyalty towards the program's website. Thus, consumers were able to transmit their likability towards a television program into loyalty towards a television program's website.

The effects of advertising within cross-media marketing settings are therefore a viable interest for marketers. In terms of advertising, Lin and Cho (2012) suggest that the loyalty created towards subsequent mediums (through cross-media marketing) will translate to advertisements within these mediums. That is, because loyalty is created through cross-media campaigns (i.e., loyalty towards a television program's website will stem from loyalty towards the television show itself), this loyalty will be transferred towards the subsequent medium's content, particularly the advertisements within the subsequent medium. Furthermore, Ha and Chan-Olmsted (2001) noted an increase in online purchase intention due to the advertisements placed within cross-media marketing efforts. Based on this conceptual framework, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Cross-media behaviors will be positively related to Aad.

Engagement

In 2006, the ARF (pp. 10) referred to engagement with an advertisement as "turning on a prospect to a brand idea enhanced by the surrounding context." The definition refers to not merely the advertisement's brand, but the brand's 'surrounding context'. That is, not only should an engaged consumer grasp the advertisement's concept, but in having such a grasp, the consumer should consider the advertised brand as being superior to other brands. Thus, within the same report, Robert Passikoff stated, "engagement is the consequence of a marketing or communication effort that results in an increased level of brand equity for the product/service" (ARF, 2006, pp. 10). Engagement not only increases attention towards a program (Heath, 2009), but also amplifies interest towards a program's advertisements (Lin and Cho, 2010). Due to these positive aspects, both practitioners and scholars are therefore interested in the formation of such engagement.

While an advertisement in itself can obtain viewer engagement through a variety of means (i.e., humor, excitement, visual concepts, repetition, etc.) there are still other ways to generate engagement towards an ad. Specifically, literature suggests engagement with advertisements can stem from viewers being involved/engaged with the program hosting the advertisements (Feltham and Arnold, 1994; Lloyd and Clancy, 1991; Mattes and Cantor, 1982; Moorman et al., 2007). That is to say, when being emerged or engaged within a television program itself, viewers will maintain that same level of engagement and transfer it to the commercials played during the program's break. Scholars have provided support for this sentiment, as several studies have shown a positive relationship between program involvement and advertising effectiveness (e.g., Lloyd and Clancy, 1991). Therefore, in acknowledging the positive relationship between engagement and advertising effectiveness, we must look at certain programs that garner high levels of engagement.

Engagement with sport

Sports, unlike other entities and/or television programs produce uncharacteristic levels of engagement. Each year, millions of individuals invest their time, energy, and money in supporting a favorite team; and in doing so, engage in a variety of behaviors stemming from the passion involved with sports (Vallerand, et al., 2008). McDaniel (1999) claims sports are different than other entities because they garner a sense of identification and familiarity with individuals. Research on the concept of sport team identification (Wann, 2006) is of particular relevance, as scholars suggest individuals integrate sport as part of their identification (Wann et al., 2003). Accordingly, Wann et al. (2003) define sport team identification as “a strong psychological connection to a team...a central component to their self-identity” (pp. 407).

Individuals who watch sports with such a psychological attachment are therefore not simply involved with a sports program, but are psychologically and emotionally engaged. Sport team identification has been shown to predict emotional outcomes, such as psychological health and even aggression (Vallerand et al., 2008; Wann, 2006; Wann et al., 2003). This passion, according to Vallerand et al. (2008) can eventually develop into a psychological ‘obsession’. Significant to the current study, such passion “may be best seen as a construct that triggers psychological processes, which in turn lead to adaptive or maladaptive outcomes” (pp. 1291). In seeing such passion towards sports, and noting the aforementioned ability of engagement to transfer to advertisements, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Sports passion will be positively related to Aad.

METHODS AND RESULTS

Data for this study were drawn from a larger study of Americans’ attitudes toward sports. An online survey of 993 US adults was administered to respondents drawn from a panel developed by Survey Sampling, Inc., a professional market research company. Gender quotas were used in order to obtain equal numbers of male and female respondents.

Respondents in the study were 51% female and 49% male. A little more than a third (35.9%) were under the age of 50, and 38.8% were college graduates. 88.4% reported described themselves as White, and 51.4% had annual household incomes under \$50,000.

Five cross-media behaviors, including television, Internet, and print, were measured on a 5-pt. scale anchored by never (1) and daily (5), then summed into a single variable ($\alpha = .92$). Mean values for each of the media behaviors measured can be found in Table 1.

Table 1
Cross-media behaviors

$\alpha=.89$	Mean	St. Dev.
Watch sports on television	3.08	1.29
Watch or listen to sports news on TV or radio	2.80	1.49
Read the sports pages of your newspaper	2.54	1.57
Use the Internet to follow sports	2.32	1.42
Read magazines on sports and athletes	1.82	1.01

Sports passion was measured using a 7-pt. scale anchored by hate (1) and love (7) for sports in general and 18 individual sports, then summed into a single variable ($\alpha = .92$). Respondents in the study had very favorable attitudes toward sports in general and many individual sports measured. Mean values for each of the sports measured can be found in Table 2.

Table 2
Sports passion

$\alpha=.92$	Mean	St. Dev.
Sports in general	4.94	1.64
Summer Olympic Games	4.66	1.89
Professional football (NFL)	4.64	2.00
Gymnastics	4.35	1.59
College football	4.27	1.85
Figure skating	4.25	1.66
Professional baseball (MLB)	4.15	1.95
Swimming	3.92	1.73
College basketball	3.88	1.78
Men's professional basketball (NBA)	3.58	1.86
NASCAR	3.32	1.93
NHL ice hockey	3.29	1.85
Men's professional golf (PGA)	3.26	1.87
Men's professional tennis (ATP)	3.13	1.69
Women's professional tennis	3.11	1.79
Women's professional basketball (WNBA)	3.03	1.65
Mixed martial arts (UFC)	2.96	1.73
Women's professional golf (LPGA)	2.82	1.69
Professional wrestling (WWE)	2.44	1.72

Attitude toward advertising was measured using a single-item question about liking advertising in general on a 5-pt. scale anchored by “dislike a lot” (1) and “like a lot” (5), adapted from Shavitt et al. (1998). Respondents in the study tended to hold unfavorable views toward advertising, with 44% having said they dislike advertising “a lot” or “a little” compared to only 20.9% holding a liking advertising (See Table 3).

Table 3
Attitude toward advertising frequencies

	Mean
Dislike a lot	23.9%
Dislike a little	20.5%
Neither	34.7%
Like a little	16.6%
Like a lot	4.3%

Hypotheses concerning respondents' attitudes toward advertising were tested using a hierarchical multiple regression model. Examination of the data utilized in the above analysis suggested that they conformed to the assumptions of the technique, including the absence of multicollinearity, as tolerance levels for variables in the equation were all at or above the .60 level, which exceeds the commonly accepted threshold for multicollinearity of .19 and below (Hair, et al., 1995, pp. 129).

Table 4
Regression Results for Attitude toward the Ad

	Attitude toward the Ad				
	<i>Final Beta</i> ^a	<i>R</i> ²	<i>R</i> ² Change	<i>F Change</i>	<i>df</i>
<i>Demographics</i>		.051	.051	10.536***	5/988
Gender ^b	.143***				
Age	-.129***				
Education	-.095**				
Income	.029				
Race/ethnicity ^c	.094**				
<i>Cross-media behaviors</i>	.141***	.128	.077	87.186***	1/987
<i>Sports passion</i>	.276***	.179	.052	62.220***	1/986

^aBeta weights from final regression equation with all variables included

^bCoded as 1 = male, 2 = female

^cDummy variable coded as 1 = Nonwhite

p* < .05, *p* < .01, ****p* < .001

Results for the first hypothesis, which posited that attitude toward advertising is a function of demographics appear in Table 4. The tabled hierarchical regression results show a positive relationship between demographics and attitude toward advertising. The direction of the betas indicate that females, younger respondents, less educated respondents, and Non-White respondents reported more positive attitudes toward advertising. The results provide full support for the first hypothesis as the demographic variables explain 5.1% of the variance in the dependent variable.

The second hypothesis concerned the influence of respondents' cross-media usage. The regression results in Table 4 show that H2 received full support. Cross-media behaviors were a statistically significant predictor of attitude toward advertising. After controlling for demographics, the cross-media variable explained an additional 7.7% of the variance explained in attitude toward advertising.

The final hypothesis examined the influence of sports passion on attitude toward advertising. The results in Table 4 support the research hypothesis as the affect measure makes a statistically significant contribution to the model, adding an additional 5.2% to the model after controlling for demographics and cross-media behaviors. With a beta of .276, sports passion was the strongest predictor of attitude toward advertising among all variables tested.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETING PRACTITIONERS

According to Evens and Lefever (2011), "the economic impact of sports media...is reflected in the substantial audience ratings for sports programming, the explosion of sports media outlets, and the multibillion dollar value of sports broadcasting rights contracts and sponsor deals" (pp.33-34). Still, while there may be a substantial economic impact, media companies are nonetheless given the task of justifying this value for sports broadcastings rights, particularly amongst advertisers. The current study provides such justification by introducing the concept of 'passion transfer', showing that there is a strong positive relationship between sports passion and attitude toward advertising.

The idea of passion transfer alludes to sport's unique ability to transfer a rare sense of passion towards sport programs to the program's associated advertisements. Scholars contend that sport, unlike other programs, enables consumers to have abnormally high levels of familiarity and excitement (McDaniel, 1999; Wann, 2006; Wann et al., 2003). Such passion towards sport programs delivers value to advertisers. This uncommonly high sense of passion is directly transferred to the advertisements associated with sport programs, as the results of our study show a significant relationship between sports passion and Aad. While the concept of transferring engagement from

program to advertisement is not a novel idea (Lin and Cho, 2010) it stands as a unique concept in the sports advertising context. Sport, in having an ability to generate unusual high levels of engagement, thus has a capacity to transfer these high levels of engagement to its associated advertisements.

The study's findings are also important in their ability to showcase the value in use emotional advertising effectiveness measures. While some scholars still contend for the use of aspects such as recall, Haley and Baldinger (2000) state emotional measures (i.e., likability) are significant in both mediating message effectiveness, and predicting sales generation. Our results further Haley and Baldinger's (2000) claims. That is, because the current study shows a relationship between passion and Aad, we recommend that advertising buyers and sellers in sports contexts—sports properties, agencies, media buyers, and advertisers—take notice of the importance of emotional measures in addition to cognitive factors such as recall or recognition.

Results of the study also suggest demographics and cross-media behaviors are significantly related to Aad. Both aspects are particularly helpful towards the sport industry as sport allows for a wide array of demographics to consume its programs, and therefore its advertisements. Cross-media behaviors' relationship to Aad is also important to advertisers, as sport entities tend to present their content through numerous media (i.e., radio, television, smart phone, etc; Enoch and Johnson, 2010) In showing a relationship between cross-media behaviors and Aad, we further the notion of convergence over cannibalization (Enoch and Johnson, 2010). Rather than sport consumers allowing one medium to overtake the other (cannibalization), viewers are satisfied with using multiple media synergistically (convergence). In recognizing this, and in showing a relationship between cross-media behaviors and Aad, our study exhibits media convergence has an additive and cumulative effect on a vertically integrated sports platform's advertisements. The study provides support for the value of vertically integrated sports media buys in delivering more receptive audiences for advertising.

The idea of passion transfer can be useful for media companies in that it can be employed to justify the costs of advertising fees. The current study was exploratory in nature, only demonstrating that there is a positive relationship between sports advertising and attitude toward advertising. Future research should focus on the mechanics of passion transfer; of how and why sports passion is related to positive attitudes toward advertising. Future studies should also seek more specific contexts-specific sports, audiences and advertising-to ascertain information relating to market conditions and passion transfer. Furthermore, researchers should investigate which sports in particular garner a sense of passion transfer in comparison to others, and what makes them more effective as advertising vehicles.

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