CONTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY – A CASE STUDY OF BARBEQUE NATION

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ABSTRACT

Background: *In this era of the internet social media has taken a valuable place in terms of providing information, connecting, and socializing. The hotel industry of the 21st century has also accepted this situation and doing everything to connect with their customers through various platforms. Barbeque nation has been chosen as a brand to study since it is available at 138 locations in India.* **Objective:** *To understand the relationship between social media marketing traits (entertainment, interaction, customer engagement, and word of mouth), brand attachment, and purchase intention.* **Methodology:** *This is a quantitative study, and a structured questionnaire was given to respondents that were selected through the convenience sampling method. All the respondents were from Delhi. The analysis of data was done through IBM SPSS 21 statistics tool. Exploratory factor analysis and regression analysis has been applied to analyse the data of 245 respondents (63.3% male and 35.9 % female).* **Results:** *The results revealed that the word of mouth is the strongest predictor of purchase intention followed by the interaction. Entertainment is also found to be a key variable in attracting customers by Barbeque Nation.* **Conclusion:** *On analysis, it was found that all the social media marketing traits and brand attachment somewhere affect the purchase intention. The results of this study can be used by managers to plan strategies for their future and existing customers.*

Key Words: *Social Media Marketing Traits, Brand Attachment, Purchase Intention, Customer Engagement, Word of Mouth*

INTRODUCTION

Social media is an effective cyberspace for accessing reliable and updated information (Hur et al., 2017).The proliferation of social media has transformed communication in people's lives with its growth and global application (Chang et al., 2014). Most firms are utilizing social media to enhance business brand image and raise brand awareness (Nisar & Whitehead, 2016). In the present scenario, social media is used more widely and frequently than the physical involvement of individuals for communication. It is also observed that on average consumers spend more than 5.5 hours per day participating on social media websites, with the rising usage of social media, these social networking sites are recognized as tools for creating online communities of users who share interests, activities, and objectives (Bolotaeva & Cata, 2010). Some of the popular social media are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube (Okazaki et al., 2017). Many firms take the benefit of social media to increase sales growth, customer engagement, efficient distribution and procurement, high customer satisfaction, reduction in costs, and enhanced brand image (Melián-González & Bulchand-Gidumal, 2016).

Before the popularity of social media, travel consumers used to rely on travel journalism and traditional media to help them find and choose the best and most exciting hotels to visit which are now replaced by the Internet (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).Social media is now acting as an information resource for travel-related businesses and the Internet is being used by consumers for planning their travel and leisure trips (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014).Using social media, consumers have access to different sources of shared information from other consumers about their experiences and recommendations which influences their purchasing decisions (Cheng et al., 2009).Internet reviews and ratings of social websites boost guest confidence in decision-making. Guests go through these reviews and feedback while planning, before, during, and after their trips as well as said by So et al. (2014). There is a strong motive behind using social media as it allows hotels to access their loyal and potential customers directly without wasting time and resources (Hur et al., 2017). It is recognized by many hotels that social media plays a vital role in gaining brand popularity and raising brand awareness. Therefore, hotels are investing more on platforms like social media in terms of manpower and time as currently for them it is not a very high investment (Assenov & Khurana, 2012).

Since the advent of social media, in the tourism and hospitality industry, the adoption of social media for online reviews and obtaining customer feedback has been revolutionary Wang and Chang (2013).Social media marketing efforts have many variables or dimensions. Some of them studied over here are entertainment, interaction, word of mouth, customer engagement, brand attachment, purchase intention. Out of these, entertainment, interaction, word of mouth (WOM), and customer engagement are the four dimensions that affect consumer's affection towards a specific brand that defines brand attachment. Brand attachment ultimately affects a consumer's purchase intention and habits to buy a specific product or service from a brand.

There is a major impact of entertainment on a firm's performance as it helps to bring business. Zillmann (1988) has defined entertainment brings light-hearted and cheerful states in one's life by bringing positivity and balanced arousal and help to distract people from negative thought. Social networking sites like Facebook being part of social media, allows registered users to interact worldwide and freely with consumers who share the same interest by uploading photos, sharing a post, chatting, commenting on a post and also getting replies, allows hotels and companies to get feedback and quick responses immediately from consumers. These software and technology updates available on social networking sites are part of the web 2.0 system (Seth, 2012).The main fundamental feature of social media interaction is to exchange communication between brands and customers (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Interaction between existing and potential customers about a brand leads to word of mouth (Basak et al., 2004) has defined word of mouth (WOM)as a process that allows customers to share their experiences and distribute knowledge with others about specific products, brands, and services. Further WOM has been defined (Zeithaml et al., 1996) WOM serves as one of the information sources for travelers in the process of purchase decision-making and can also help attract tourists. Travelers who usually rely on the source of WOM consider the received information as more credible, reliable, and trustworthy. Customer engagement also helps to build an image of a brand in front of customers by engaging customers on social media through pages or groups of customers develops a bond with a brand. Sashi (2012) has defined Customer engagement focuses on developing relations between a business and consumers along with initiating new, high-value customer relationships. Engagement is a combination of a rational and emotional alliance, defined by studying the mechanisms of these bonds for new versus repeat purchase customers of a specific service brand (Hur et al., 2017). The main purpose of engaging and connecting with

consumers is to develop the bond of consumers towards a business, which in turn results in loyalty, more prolonged customers that are willing to spend more money when buying products (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

Entertainment, interaction, word of mouth, and customer engagement lead to brand attachment. Brand attachment can be described as the solidity of the bond connecting consumers with a particular brand. Brand attachment plays a vital role in hotels and companies by reducing consumer defections and gaining consumer tolerance when facing negative information. (Ahluwalia et al., 2001).Brand attachment can be visualized as emotion bonding, the degree of affection, passion, and the connection to measure the consumer attachment towards a specific brand. Social media is the right medium to look for information for developing preferences about products/brands(Naylor et al.,2012).Social media help various companies regarding tourism and hospitality allowing them to engage with potential guests and to increase online presence (Leung et al., 2013). All these variables ultimately affect customer's purchase intention. Allameh et al. (2015) has defined purchase intention refers to efforts that consumers are willing to buy product or brands. The main factors motivating purchase intentions can be attitude, evaluations, and perceptions of a brand. Purchasing intention is a mental decision stage. The possibility of purchasing a specific product lies in the hands of the customers (Kizgin et al., 2018).

The social media marketing traits which influences business are-

Entertainment: The purpose of entertainment is to bring funny and enjoyable and cheerful states in one's life, cheerful states such as positivity and excitement and helps one to distract from negative thoughts (Zillmann,1988) Entertainment is a way of reducing or escaping pressure (Lee & Ma, 2012). The entertainment happiness achieved by social media can be measured by its capability to assure the user's needs for enjoyment and anxiety relief. Interaction: Interaction involves sharing and exchanging ideas, thoughts, and feeling about their experiences with the brand through the online and offline mean to the brand and other customers (Muntinga et al.,2011).Customer Engagement: Customer engagement focus on nurturing the relations between an organization and customers along with setting-up new and high-value customer connections (Sashi, 2012). The aim of engaging and connecting with customers is bringing valuable customers towards an organization, which helps in guest loyalty who are willing to spend more money and try new products (Hollebeek et al., 2014). The growing use of social media has provided a chance to the hospitality sector to be in touch

with their customer through several modes like writing reviews, blogging, joining Facebook, Twitter, Instagram (Asperen et al., 2018).Word of mouth (WOM): WOM is the most influential source of information transferred by customers through oral communication among people regarding a brand, product, or service (Zeithaml et al., 1996). WOM is one of the sources that inform customers; recall of a specific brand, whereby enhances brand awareness (Pitta & Katsanis, 1995).

Brand attachment: Brand Attachment is an emotional attachment of customers to the brand (Huaman-Ramirez & Merunka, 2019). Park et al. (2010) defined brand attachment as the feeling of self-connection, bond, or attachment towards a brand. Thomson et al. (2005) brand attachment, is measured through the three-dimensional scale (affection, passion, and connection) which is developed by Ansary and Hashim (2018), brand attachment can help the brand in the bad time or when facing negative information by gaining forgiveness, and loyalty from the customer (Ahluwalia et al., 2001).

Purchase Intention: It is defined as the effort that a customer can make to purchase a product or service of brands. The factors behind it can be loyalty, attitude, and perceptions toward the brand (Allameh et al., 2015). Purchase intention is an individual tendency to purchase a product or service (McKnight and Chervany, 2001). It is a mental decision stage and whether the customer wants to purchase the specific product or not.
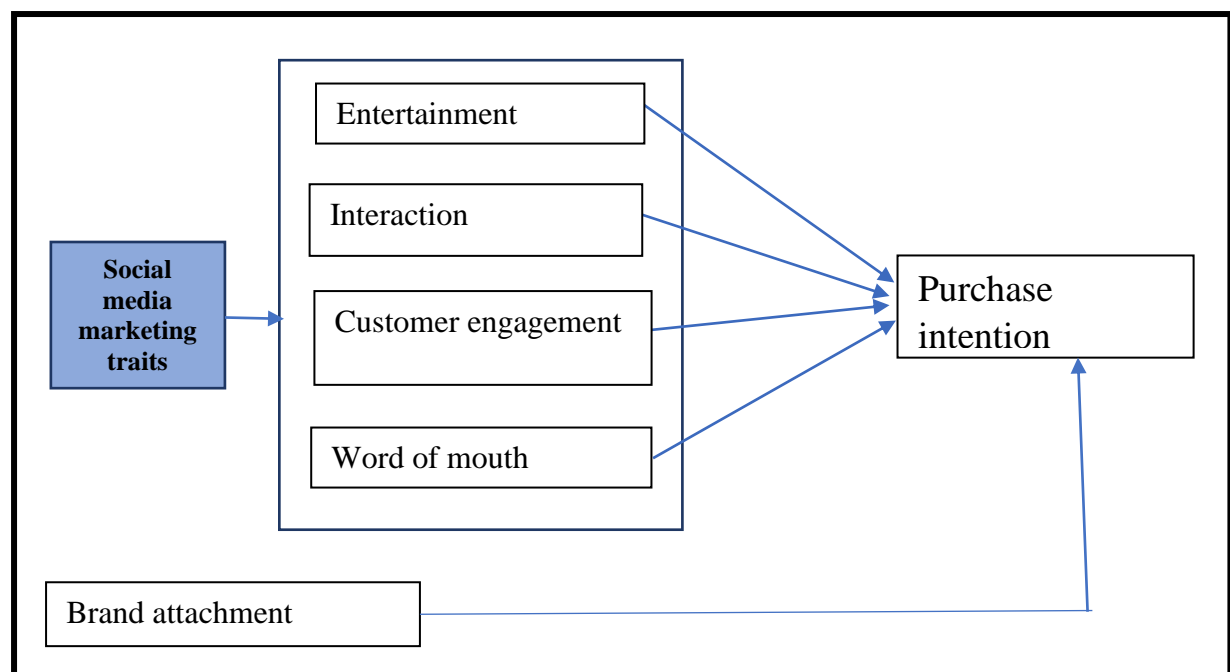
Figure1: Relationship of social media marketing traits, brand attachment and purchase intention

The current study takes into consideration the importance of social media in today's dynamic and competitive environment. Where brands try to find out the newest techniques to engage the customer to their brand. In previous studies variables like entertainment (Zillmann, 1988), interaction (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010), customer engagement (Sashi, 2012), and word of mouth (Pitta and Katsanis, 1995) have been studied. However, there is no study found which takes into consideration all the variables altogether. Authors in the current study have named all these variables like social media marketing traits. Also, there are very few studies that have studied the impact of these variables on purchase intention (Asperen et al., 2018). Therefore, the objectives of the study were:

- To understand the relationship between social media marketing traits and purchase intention.
- To examine the impact of brand attachment on the purchase intention of consumers.

Hypotheses

H1: Entertainment significantly affects the purchase intention of a customer.

H2: Interaction significantly affects the purchase intention of a customer.

H3: Customer engagement significantly affects the purchase intention of a customer.

H4: Word of mouth significantly affects the purchase intention of a customer.

H5: Brand Attachment significantly affects purchase intention of a customer.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The current study was a quantitative study that examines various social media factors affecting the purchase intention of customers while choosing the Barbeque Nation. The primary data for the study was collected through the survey method and secondary data has been gathered through various research papers published in reputed journals. The research papers have been sourced from google scholar, ProQuest, and EBSCO.

Locale: The target population for the current study were the users who have visited Barbeque nation in the recent past in the region of Delhi and Delhi NCR.

Sampling Design: To conduct the survey convenience sampling was used, where people who have dined or ordered from barbeque nation were given a google form to respond. A qualifying question was asked as "have you dined or ordered from barbeque nation in the last six months. Those who chose yes could fill the form as their email id was present in the database.

Tools and Technique: For the current study, a structured questionnaire was made from previous studies. For all the six variables namely entertainment (4), interaction (4), customer engagement (3), word of mouth (3), brand attachment (5), and purchase intention (6) a total of 25 questions were framed. A five-point Likert scale has been used to measure the responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. A total of 249 questionnaires were filled, but for analysis 245 are used, 5 were discarded because of incomplete information.

Table 1: Instrument development

Variable	No. of Items	Author
Entertainment	4	Hur et al., (2017)
Interaction	4	So et al., (2014)
Customer engagement	3	Pagani et al., (2011)
Word of mouth	3	Zeithaml et al. (1996)
Brand attachment	5	Park et al. (2010)
Purchase intention	6	McKnight and Chervany (2002), Wang and Chang (2013), Yoo and Donthu (2001).

The outlet chosen for the study was the Barbeque nation, which was established in 2006, currently has 138 outlets throughout India.

Data and Statistical Analysis: The data collected was analysed using IBM SPSS 21 statistics, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) followed by reliability, and lastly, regression analysis has been applied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic profile of the respondents: The samples collected composed of 245 individuals, of which 155(63.3%) were males and 88(35.9%) were females and 2 preferred not to reveal. The marital status of respondents was as follows- single 184(75.1%) Married 50 (20.4%) and

11(4.5%) individuals preferred not to reveal. 180 individuals fell into the (16-25) age bracket,33 individuals in (26-35),21 in (36-45), and 11 in 45 and above age brackets. Individuals who have bachelor's degrees accounted for the most 147(60%), 41(16.7%) individuals had master's degrees, 36(14.7%) individuals had studied till high school or less and for other qualifications 21.

When asked respondents which social media platform, they use individuals who use Instagram accounted for the most 184(75%), 167(68.2%) use Facebook, 87(35.5%) individuals use Twitter, and 81(33.1%) individuals use LinkedIn. When asked respondents about the average time spent on social networking sites out of 245 respondents 108(44.1%) respondents spent (1-3) hours on social networking sites,82(33.5%) respondents spend less than 1 hour on social networking sites,55(22.4%) individuals use social networking sites for more than 3 hours. When we asked respondents how often they visit barbeque Nation 171 (69.8%) respondents visited once in a month, 30(12.2%) visited once in a week,27(11%) visit Twice in a month, rest 17(6.9%) respondents twice in a week.

Exploratory Factor Analysis**:** In the study, the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) value is .911, which shows that the sample size is appropriate and that the significance value for the KMO test is .000 (Hair et al., 2016). Initial Eigen values are shown in table 2.

Table 2: Total variance explained

Component	Initial Eigen values			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.106	56.354	56.354	2.807	24.689	24.689
2	1.002	9.124	65.478	2.356	22.625	47.314
3	.765	6.941	72.419	1.947	17.258	64.572
4	.651	6.045	78.464	1.355	13.891	78.464

As shown in table 2, 78.46 percent is the average percentage of cumulative variance described by the constructs, which indicates that constructs are well suited for the analysis to gather data.

Reliability**:** For all the attributes, the reliability test indicates the alpha coefficient value is greater than 0.7 for all the attributes, which indicates that the instrument was reliable, there were a total of 17 attributes. Table 3 shows Cronbach's Alpha statistic.

Table 4 shows that the determination coefficient indicates that 68.8 percent is the variance described by the independent variables on the dependent variable. Our model explains that almost 70% of the variance of the dependent variable is explained by independent variables.

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha statistics

Dimensions	Cronbach α	Number of items
Entertainment	0.858	4
Interaction	0.867	4
Customer engagement	0.757	3
Word of mouth	0.807	3
Brand attachment	0.924	5
Purchase Intention	0.939	6

Table 4: Regression analysis for social media marketing traits

Model Summary			
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.827[a]	.714	.688	.47925
a. Predictors: (Constant), Entertainment, Interaction, Customer engagement, word of mouth			

As shown in table 6, the value of R square is significant as implied by the Value of F (0.000) that suggests that the dependent and independent variables have a degree of relationship.

$Y = a + bx$

$= .266 + .151x_1 + .236x_2 + .157x_3 + .401x_4$

The equation shows that the dependent variable will have a significant change if the value of the independent variable gets changed, this results in a significant relationship.

The correlation coefficient value between the predictors was positive but poor, so statistically, it was less important (Table 7). The 18.9 percent value of Adjusted R square indicates that brand attachment is less significant. As shown by the P-value (0.000), the value of R square was statistically important. Table 5 displays coefficients. The R square value is statistically significant, as shown by the P-value (0.000).

All the four constructs of social media marketing traits i.e., Engagement, Interaction, Customer engagement, and word of mouth significantly affect purchase intentions. As per the result of standardized coefficients, the word of mouth had the maximum significant impact on purchase intentions.

Table 5: Coefficients

Coefficients						
Model		**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
		B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
	(Constant)	.266	.109		2.458	.017
	Entertainment	.131	.049	.151	2.745	.006
	Interaction	.244	.047	.236	4.589	.000
	Customer engagement	.156	.043	.157	2.697	.005
	Word of mouth	.382	.050	.401	7.587	.000
a. Dependent Variable: given the same social media marketing traits, would you like to reuse the services of Barbeque Nation						

Table 6: Regression analysis for brand attachment

Model Summary				
Model	**R**	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**	**Std. Error of the Estimate**
1	.456[a]	.227	.189	.77547

a. Predictors: (Constant My thoughts and feelings toward the Barbeque Nation are often automatic coming to my mind seemingly on their own, my thoughts and feelings toward the Barbeque Nation come to my mind naturally and instantly, I have many thoughts about the Barbeque Nation, The Barbeque Nation is part of me and who I am, and I feel personally connected to the Barbeque Nation, the complexity of the Barbeque Nation attracts me the most

Table 7: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.745	.165		9.629	.000
My thoughts and feelings toward the Barbeque Nation are often automatic coming to my mind seemingly on their own.	.119	.069	.169	1.597	.091
My thoughts and feelings toward the Barbeque Nation come to my mind naturally and instantly.	-.189	.079	-.248	-2.298	.019
I have many thoughts about the Barbeque Nation.	.159	.068	.209	2.219	.030
The Barbeque Nation is part of me and who I am, and I feel personally connected to the Barbeque Nation.	.149	.082	.189	1.958	.049
The complexity of the Barbeque Nation attracts me the most.	-.029	.079	-.039	-.428	.647
a. Dependent Variable: given the attachment with the brand, would you like to reuse the services of Barbeque nation					

The results of the study revealed that the word of mouth plays a very crucial role in retaining a customer. This finding is in line with the finding of Zeithaml et al. (1996).There is a positive relationship between the self-expressive nature of brands "liked" and brand love. Consumers who engage with inner self-expressive brands are more likely to offer WOM for that brand. Interaction of customer with the brand that may be though online or offline is a significant factor in achieving repeat customers, as found by Muntinga et al. (2011).Lee and

Ma (2012) revealed that entertainment influences the purchase intention of customers, our results revealed that the entertainment is the third most influencing attribute. Customer engagement was also found to be a significant factor that affects the purchase intentions in line with Aspergen et al. (2018). The engagement has also been discussed in the advertising literature where it is suggested that it measure the strength of a company's customer relationships based on the extent to which customers have formed both emotional and rational bonds with a brand and that affects the purchase intention (Hur et al., 2017).The professional study recommends that having good communication with customers is the utmost preference for an organization (Accenture, 2015). This helps in raising their engagement with the brand which can be favourable in the attachment (Forbes, 2016). Customers who have a positive and pleasant experience or stay with the brands are more likely to get attached and become a repeated customer, and they also suggest other customers through Word of Mouth (Kang et al., 2016).Brand attachment which is a very strong predictor of purchase intention (Huaman-Ramirez & Merunka, 2019) has a very less significant positive impact on purchase intention in our findings. Brand attachment is one of the main concepts which are studied in the domain of customer–brand relationships because it is well established that this emotional bond between customers and brands has strong and positive consequences on multiple relationships and behaviors such as compulsive buying (Japutra et al., 2019). The customer's perception of a brand's intentions is defined as brand warmth. A brand with positive, cooperative intentions appears warm, whereas brands with negative, competitive, or exploitative intentions seem cold (Rosli et al., 2020).

Table 8: Hypotheses

Hypothesis	t-Value	Sig.	Results
Entertainment and purchase intention	2.745	0.006	Accepted
Interaction and purchase intention	4.589	0.000	Accepted
Customer engagement and Purchase intention	2.697	0.005	Accepted
Word of mouth and purchase intention	7.587	0.000	Accepted
Brand attachment and purchase intention	1.597	0.091	Accepted

The results reveal that the importance of social media marketing traits in the Hospitality industry cannot be neglected. In entertainment, all respondents are agreed with the questions which were asked to them like how they use social media in their lifestyle to combat boredom or helping in time pass or is it helpful in providing useful information. The t-value is 2.745 with a significance value of 0.006 this suggests that the quotient of entertainment on the social media platform of the Barbeque Nation attracts consumers (H1). Interaction is involving customers with the brand and many customers agreed that they like to involve in discussions of the community, love to talk with like-minded people, or exchange their ideas. With the t-value of 4.589 with the significance value of 0.000, it is suggested that the barbeque nation should provide more opportunities for the consumer to interact that could be on online platforms or offline (H2). While concluding it is formed that customer like to engage in Barbeque Nation's social media profiles whether like to read the post and put comments on them or loved watching photos/videos of the outlet it is represented by t-value of 2.697 at the significance of 0.005 (H3). The consumers are spreading word of mouth (t-value of 7.587 at the significance of 0.000) for Barbeque Nation, this implies that the quality of its products is consistent (H4), however, they can still improve the quality of products and service.

Results for Brand Attachment (t-value 1.597 at the significance value 0.091) suggest that this is less significant (H5), the customers do not order products very frequently. In this regard, the managers can think of strategies to connect to consumers and find out the reason for this. Though in our findings most of the consumers are neutral on this. Purchase Intention is a preference of a customer to buy a product and nowadays social media is playing a major role in that and our survey also shows that many customers are agreed with that. Social media marketing traits (Entertainment, Interaction, Customer engagement, word of mouth) positively affect purchase intention. However, brand attachment less significantly affects purchase intentions. All the independent variable has a contribution to building a relationship with the customer to gain the trust and prevents from changing its focus to other brands even if there is short time downfall. There is not any specific practical data that agree with that statement but while analysing it shows that if the customer is engaged or emotionally attached to the brand it increases the purchase intentions. All social media traits significantly affect the purchase intention of the consumer in a good way. These variables provide new unique ways to reach new customers or engage with existing customers and boost their desired goals.

CONCLUSION

It is important for the Barbeque Nation to understand the importance of social media marketing traits in today's competitive business environment. Current study found that all the social media marketing traits that are discussed have a positive significant affect on the purchase intention. The managers should focus on the techniques through which word of mouth can be spread, one way could be quality assurance. Word of mouth was found to be most influential factor in deciding purchase intention. The management of Barbeque Nation should make strategies to wherein customers can be engaged, interact, and entertain. These factors will make a long-lasting impact on the customer and eventually will bring customers back. Moreover, Social media marketing traits in combination with brand attachment can be used by the management to attract new customers as well as to retain existing customers.

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