

Advancement Inclination Behaviors and University Academic Staff Patronage of Deposit Money Banks in Port Harcourt

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between Advancement Inclination Behaviors (AIB) and customer patronage (CP) of Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State. Drawing on the Regulatory Focus Theory, in general, and promotion focus in particular, the paper argues that advancement inclination behaviors can influence customer patronage of these banks' products. Primary data collected with structured questionnaire from seven hundred and ninety-two (792) academic staff of three Universities in Rivers State, were analyzed using the Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient, as obtained in SPSS version 20.0. The study found a significant and positive relationship between advancement inclination behaviors and customer patronage. The paper, therefore, recommends that firms which seek to achieve increased patronage from these academic staff should take cognizance of their advancement inclination behaviors in the design, development and delivery of bank products.

Keywords: Advancement Inclination Behaviors, Customer Patronage, Promotion - focused inclination, Regulatory focus, University Academic staff.

INTRODUCTION

Modern day markets are getting more demanding, with consumers getting even more fickle and sophisticated, as a result of unstable business environment. Business is done in highly complex environment ((Davis & Sumara, 2010). Competitive pressures from national and international players are on the increase due to the globalization of markets and the power of information and communication technology, which have collapsed national boundaries and put firms in one country in direct competition with firms in other countries. These have made the world to be flat, and organizations, such as banks, must adapt (Friedman, 2005). Hence, in addition to leveraging the gains of customer retention, firms (especially those in the banking sector) must continually strive to attract and win new customers in order to survive and prosper in business. However, for banks to attract new and retain existing customers, they must understand the motivation of these customers.

Understanding the motivation of individuals and organizations to patronize banks' products has been a much sought after knowledge in our fast-paced modern day business environment. Relying on hedonistic (Kniesner and Leeth, 2010; Kniesner and Leeth, 1988; Rosen, 1974; Kahn and Lang, 1988; Zhou and Pham, 2004), psychological (Larsen & Buss, 2009; McCrae et al, 2005; McCrae & Costa, 1997; Bandura ,1977; Pervin, 1993), and consumer behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Bay et al, 2003) theories, the tendency is to believe or speculate that all consumers (individuals and corporate bodies) are constantly engaged in self-regulation, pursuing goals of advancement, personal development and achievement/accomplishment and avoid states of insecurity, instability and pain (Higgins, 1997, 2001, 2005; Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Higgins, 2006; Cesario et al, 2008; Higgins, 2000; Higgins, et al, 2001; Spiegel et al, 2004; Lockwood, et al, 2002). Hence, implying that marketing executives of banks can appeal to prospective customers on these fronts, since the primary focus of marketing is customer satisfaction at a profit (Gee et al, 2008; Ramakrishnan, 2006; Stone et al, 2000; Terblanche & Bosh off, 2010). This study therefore believes that appealing to customers and prospective customers using the goals they seek to achieve (Freitas & Higgins, 2002; Higgins et al, 1994; Idson, Liber man, and Higgins, 2004; Higgins et al, 2003; Cesario et al, 2007) is a viable way of getting their attention and winning them over.

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The activities of Banks in any economy centers around assisting individuals, groups and organizations fulfill their life aspirations and objectives. They accomplish by creating initiatives and innovating banking products that create value for them, and enable the banks achieve their corporate objectives as well. One would therefore expect the customers’ readiness and disposition to identify with the banks and patronize the banks.

In spite of the numerous initiatives, the enormous task faced by sales force in convincing prospects into establishing a business relationship with banks almost always meet with difficulty. This is evidenced by banks’ sales forces unending drive to meet targets in order to remedy the decline in sales often experienced by these banks.

The question that begs for answer is: what could have brought about the low customer patronage in the banking industry in recent times? It seems that customer patronage might not be unconnected with advancement inclination. In view of this doubt and uncertainty, we have the interest to study the nexus between Advancement Inclination Behaviors and Customer Patronage in the banking industry in Rivers State.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND HYPOTHESES

Promotion-Focused Inclination Behaviors

Higgins’s theory of self-regulatory focus moves beyond the “hedonic” (pleasure-seeking) principle. Regulatory focus theory has been subjected to a number of applications, such as decision-making (Crowe & Higgins, 1997), leadership (Kark & Van Dijk, 2007), creativity (Baas, De Dreu, & Nijstad, 2008) and others. Self-regulatory focus theory posits that part of why individuals appear to be motivated by different factors, even if each is seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, is due to the different strategies that individuals employ to do so. Self-regulatory focus theory describes what end-states people focus on as they regulate themselves: either accomplishments or aspirations (which is termed a “promotion-focus”) or safety and responsibilities (a “prevention-focus”). This paper is based on promotion focus. Regulatory focus theory suggests that those with a focus toward promotion have an orientation toward ideals, and strive to eliminate the distance between their current state and their desired end-state(s), which are characterized or defined by aspirations and accomplishments (Higgins et al, 2003).

Higgins (Higgins, 1998) reviews empirical evidence suggesting that “ideals” and “oughts” form distinct end states. Higgins (1998) also presents new evidence providing support for the distinct emotional consequences promotion and prevention focused individuals feel when their self-regulation has failed. Regulatory focus is believed to be formed in early childhood as individuals interact with parents or caretakers (Higgins, 1996; Higgins, 1997; Idson, Liberman, & Higgins, 2000; Lee & Aaker, 2004). According to them, a focus on promotion in an individual is likely the result of being brought up in a situation where behavior was regulated by the presence or absence of positive outcomes. This makes such individuals become concerned with and see the world in terms of advancement, growth, and accomplishment. The human promotion system aspect of regulatory focus theory is concerned with obtaining nurturance (e.g., nourishing food) and underlies higher-level concerns with accomplishment and advancement (Higgins, 1997, 1998). The promotion system’s hedonic concerns relate to the pleasurable presence of positive outcomes (i.e. gains) and the painful absence of positive outcomes (i.e., non-gains) (Higgins et al, 2000).

Promotion focus has been identified to be concerned with hopes, ideals, and aspirations; or sensitivity to positive outcomes (their presence and absence) and also an inclination to approach desired end states. Higgins (1997) added that, an approach to desired end state is the natural strategy of promoting self-regulation. Specifically, self-regulation towards any specific goal may be focused upon promotion, the pursuit of gains and aspiration toward ideals (Lee, Aaker & Gardner, 2000). When promotion-focused, people’s growth and advancement needs motivate them to try to bring themselves into alignment with their ideal selves, thereby heightening the salience of potential gains to be attained (felt presence of positive outcomes) (Brockner, Higgins & Low, 2004).

Customers when faced with a situation to make a purchase decision are regulated by the ‘self’ to tilt toward pleasure and keep away from pain. Higgins, et al (1994), therefore, proposed that ideal self-regulation differ in their strategic inclination. These strategic inclinations are proposed by Crowe and Higgins (1997) as being concerned with advancement, personal development/growth, and

accomplishment. According to Higgins, (1998) in Ryu, et al (2014) promotion focus has link with advancement, achievement, and growth, and they differ in their salient goals which results in difference in sensitivity to positive and negative results, with a considerable propensity to achieve advancement related goals, these are goals that a person must attain or standards that must be met. This paper focuses on advancement inclination behavior and its relationship with customer patronage.

Customer Patronage

According to the New Webster Dictionary (1994), Patronage can be said to mean “the material help and encouragement given by a patron, in this instance the patron is seen to be a customer in an exchange transaction. It could also mean “the act of being a regular customer to a shop. In a highly competitive industry, such as banking, satisfying the customers should be the primary focus of firms that wish to sustain patronage (Johns and Tyas, 1996; Kivela, Inbakaran, and Reece, 1999; Sulek and Hensley, 2004).

According to this theory, the distinguishing between behavioral intention and other behaviors enables us to understand factors that define attitudinal influence (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). According to Householder and Green (2002), the theory of reasoned action was as a result of previous studies on attitude and behavior. The theory of reasoned action came as result of frustration with traditional attitude-behavior research, much of which found weak correlations between attitude measures and performance of volitional behaviors”(Hale, Householder & Green, 2002). Derived largely from the social psychology setting, the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) as proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1975, 1980) has three (3) components: behavioral Intention (BI), Attitude (A), and Subjective Norms (SN). TRA suggests that a person’s behavioral intention depends on the person’s attitude about the behavior and subjective norms ($BI=A+SN$). Hence, if an individual decides to enact a given behavior, then it is likely that the person will act it. This paper assessed customer patronage through patronage intention, patronage action and repeat purchase.

Patronage Intention

Service organizations can enhance customers purchase behavior by creating value in product offerings to meet customers’ expectations and satisfy their needs. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) view consumers’ purchase intention as an important indicator for predicting consumer behavior. Patronage intention describes the likelihood that the consumer will be willing to buy a specific product in the future. Zeithaml (1988) notes that merchandise value perceptions drive purchase intentions and purchase behavior in organizations. Literature on regulatory focus theory abound (Wirtz & Lwin, 2009; Brockner, Higgins, & Low, 2004; Aaker & Lee, 2006; Grewal et al, 2010; Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000; Lockwood, Jordan & Kunda, 2000; Friedman & Forster, 2001). Consumer research has examined the influence of merchandise value perceptions on consumer behavior (e.g., Dodds et al, 1991; Zeithaml et al, 1996) and shown that consumers’ evaluations of merchandise or product value impact their patronage intentions in traditional stores. Therefore, purchase intention is found to be influenced by product value. Consumers’ intention to purchase can also be seen as a connection between their attitude towards a product and its actual purchase. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), there are three notable measurement items for gauging purchase intentions: possible to buy, intended to buy and consider buying.

Patronage Action

It is important to note that purchase action by a customer entails psychological principles that has been developed to harness an understanding of consumers’ needs so that products can developed designed, and communicated in a rightful manner that can reflect the relevant and important needs of consumers. Consumer decision making is a process consisting of five stages that people go through when deciding on what products or services to buy or patronize a firm, practitioners have traditionally described consumer decision making as a series of five progressive stages namely: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post purchase processes (Grewal & Levy, 2010).

A decision is the selection of an action from several other factors; consumers make decision every day and every time. Sometimes less thought is given to this decision making process, the decision made by the economic man is quite different from those made by passive, cognitive or emotional man. Every decision-making whether to purchase or not is affected by basic and emotional state of being.

Individuals choose to initiate and conclude a purchase action depending on the perceived value of the products. Hence, Baker et al (2002) found that, consumers' choice influenced shoppers' perceptions of merchandise (product) value and hence their intention to initiate an action to purchase. Additionally, Donovan and Rossiter (1982) note that a positive banking experience would likely result in approach behavior.

Repeat Purchase

Repeat purchase can be described as the placing of order after order by a consumer from the same organization, it can also be seen as the buying of a product or services by a consumer of the same brand Repeat purchase customers are customers who are satisfied emotionally, intellectually, physically by an organization offering which could be in form of a product which exceeds their expectations.

Repeat purchase in another context could be referred to as “re-patronage intentions,” according to Wirtz and Lwin (2009) it is the willingness of an individual to re-patronize a services organization. In a relationship built on trust commitment is engendered and then becomes a major predictor of future purchases. Customers regularly visit a particular firm based on their perception of trust-that is, they believe that the company has their best interest at heart when providing a service (Caudill and Murphy 2000). A repeat purchase is often a measure of loyalty to a brand by consumers, higher repeat purchase value means a well retained, satisfied customer, also higher repeat purchase value drives higher customer value, which means a better top line in the loyalty ladder.

Higher repeat purchase value can mean higher profitability as it does not include new customer acquisition costs; organization can take some actions to ensure repeat purchase of either their products or services by listening to customer comments, suggestion, feedback, complaints, about the product or services they are offering, by also providing value adding services to the customer experience. Repeat purchase is the prime goal a company can set for its products since it is consumer reference to purchase a given brand in a product category. Customer repeat purchase is a good indicator of a long term business sustainability and profitability of an organization; this is because it points to customer satisfaction and retention.

ADVANCEMENT INCLINATION BEHAVIORS AND CUSTOMER PATRONAGE

Advancement refers to the act of advancing or the state of being advanced; improvement, progression; furtherance; promotion to a higher place of dignity (Brockner, Higgins, & Low, 2004; Leonardelli, et al, 2007). Individuals desire to make progress in life, career, family, and this is usually made possible by the products they decide to consume, the friends they associate with, and most importantly the way and manner goals are conceptualized. Promotion-focus theory has been identified as a motivational orientation that customers adopt whether as individuals or in group, in order to achieve progress, customers perceive them as effective and competent. Hence, when they reflect upon themselves, the principal motive is self enhancement (or advancement) (Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000; Leonardelli, et al, 2007).

According to Crowe and Higgins (2007), advancement inclination behavior refers to one tending to goals initiated through hopes and aspirations. Aspirations are those goals which consumers set for themselves and subjectively try to attain, consumers may aspire to own a house, drive the best car, wear designer cloths, and so on. Aspirations have a direct relationship with consumer motivation and they could also have a short or long duration before it is accomplished. The specific goal is to move forward by accomplishing goals that enable one to actualize a desired end state. Promotion focus can be conceptualized in signal detection terms (Higgins, 1997). Specifically, a person with promotion focus use enthusiastic approaches to ensure gains or to guard against non-gains as the benchmarks of their decision making behavior. Given the above, individuals in organizations with a promotion focus should attain the state of eagerness to achieve advancement and gains.

Again, individuals who desire advancements, that is, they are advancement inclined, possess risky attribute. Hence, Mourali, et al (2007a) asserts that promotion focus, which has a nexus with advancement and achievement, leads to venturesome behavior, resulting in a bias for change, actions and new alternatives. Consistent with this notion, Simonson, (1989) and Simonson and Tversky, (1992) investigated the factors driving difference in susceptibility of individuals to the compromise effect in relation to the distinct self-regulatory focus and found that promotion focus is more sensitive to the presence and absence of positive results.

Quite a number of studies have found traces of difference in propensity towards risk in choices of promotion-focused consumers as opposed to prevention-focused consumers. (Chernev, 2004b; Crowe and Higgins, 1997; Zhou and Pharm, 2004). More specifically, Chernev (2004b) indicates that the arousal of promotion focus leads to a liking for riskier financial alternatives (e.g., common stocks, shares), while, Mourali et al (2007a) demonstrates different likelihood of individuals to the compromise effect, depending on the decision-makers dominant self-regulatory focus “individuals with highly promotion focus are more likely to select options with greater potential for both success and failure”.

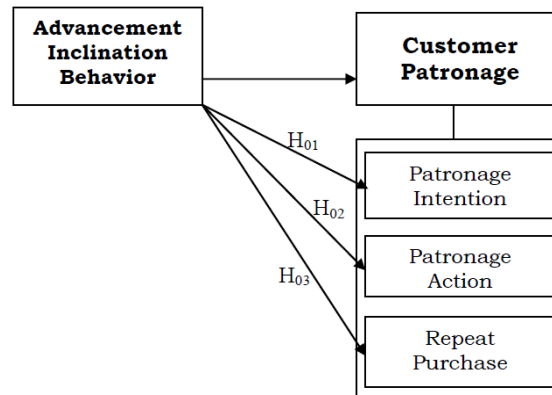


Figure2.1. Conceptual Framework of the Relationship between Advancement Inclination Behavior and Customer Patronage

Source: Review of Related Literature

This finding is assumed to be on the basis of the cardinal concern of promotion focused individuals when choosing among alternatives; such individuals’ main goal is to attain positive results and are more inclined toward potential benefits or hedonic values delivered by their choices. We, therefore, propose that:

H₀₁: Advancement inclination behaviors do not have a significant relationship with Patronage intentions of customers.

H₀₂: Advancement inclination behaviors do not have a significant relationship with patronage action.

H₀₃: Advancement inclination behaviors do not have a significant relationship with repeat purchase.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the focus was to investigate the nexus between advancement inclination behaviors, customer patronage in the banking industry. The research is causal in nature, and we adopted quantitative methodological approach, which permitted us to use questionnaire in collecting primary data. The study population comprised 792 lecturers from three universities in Rivers State. This sample was selected from a frame of 3,731, using Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970).).

To ensure the validity of the research instrument of this study, the researcher subjected it to expert jury opinion; consisting of five members of the academia that specialized in the subject area and five practitioners. The measurement items were subjected to Cronbach’s Alpha test to ascertain their internal consistency. The Table below presents a summary of the test of reliability.

Table3.2. Summary of Reliability Analysis of study Variables

S/N	Variable Measure	Cronbach’s Alpha
1.	Advancement Inclination (AI)	0.886
2.	Patronage Intention (PI)	0.832
3.	Patronage Action (PA)	0.851
4.	Repeat Purchase (RP)	0.799

Source: SPSS Output on Survey Data Analysis (2015)

All the statistical analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. This version has the capacity to transform scaled data into discrete or continuous data and vice versa.

ANALYSES

Test of Hypotheses

The test statistics used in testing the hypotheses is the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho). All analyses were done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 and the outputs are shown in tables 4.1 - 4.3.

The test result as displayed on the table above indicates a positive relationship between advancement inclinations and patronage intention in the banking industry in Rivers State, Nigeria. The test was carried out at 0.05 level of significance in a two-tailed test; the result generated a 0.679** score in the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient, which means that a strong relationship exist between the variables. Based on this result, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected; and the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Table 4.1. Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Advancement Inclination and Patronage Intention

Correlations				
Type	Variables1	Statistics	Focus on Advancement Inclination	Patronage Intentions
Spearman's rho	Focus on Advancement Inclination	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.679**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	792	792
	Patronage Intentions	Correlation Coefficient	.679**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	792	792

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output on Survey Data Analysis (2015)

This study on this part sought to confirm the truth of the above tentative statement by subjecting it to a test based on the data collected from the specially designed question items. The test was done using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho); and the summary of the test result is presented on table 4.16 below.

Table 4.2. Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Advancement Inclination and Patronage Action

Correlations				
Type	Variables1	Statistics	Focus on Advancement Inclination	Patronage Action
Spearman's rho	Focus on Advancement Inclination	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.396**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	792	792
	Patronage Action	Correlation Coefficient	.396**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	792	792

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output on Survey Data Analysis (2015)

The information displayed on the table above indicates a weak relationship between advancement inclination and the patronage action in the banking industry in Rivers State. The test was carried out at 0.05 level of significance in a two-tailed test; the result generated a correlation coefficient of 0.396**, which imply that a very weak relationship exist between advancement inclination and patronage action of customers in the banking industry, Rivers State. Consequently this study accepts the null hypothesis, and rejects the alternate hypothesis.

Table 4.3. Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Advancement Inclination and Repeat Purchase

Correlations				
Type	Variables1	Statistics	Focus on Advancement Inclination	Repeat Purchase
Spearman's rho	Focus on Advancement Inclination	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.454**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	792	792
	Repeat Purchase	Correlation Coefficient	.454**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	792	792

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output on Survey Data Analysis (2015)

The test result as shown on the table above indicates a moderate relationship between advancement inclination and repeat purchase in the banking industry in Rivers State. The test was carried out at 0.05 level of significance in a two tailed test; the result generated 0.454** score in the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient, which means that a weak relationship exist between the variables under consideration. It is on the basis of this result that this study rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternate hypothesis.

Summary of Findings

Based on the results of the tests of hypotheses presented in the preceding section, the summary of our findings are as follows:

- i. A strong and positive relationship exists between advancement inclinations and university staff's intention to patronize the banking industry in Rivers State.
- ii. A weak but positive relationship exists between advancement inclination and university staff's patronage action in the banking industry Rivers State.
- iii. A significant and positive correlation between advancement inclination and university staff's repeat purchase in the banking industry in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

A strong and positive relationship exists between advancement inclinations and university staff's intention to patronize the banking industry in Rivers State

This finding is justified by the fact that customers who wish to make progress in their career, set goals for themselves and also makes conscious efforts to achieve such goals. Such conscious effort are triggered by their perception of firm's products as having the ability to enable them advance, progress and more especially improve their family wellbeing. Consequently, firms find it easier to elicit desired psychological states of willingness, intention to patronize such bank products. In a series of experiments using diverse methodologies, Higgins and his colleagues have found evidence that a promotion focus inclines individuals to approach matches to desired end-states (Higgins, Roney, Crowe, & Hymes, 1994; Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Shah, Higgins, & Friedman, 1998; Forster, Higgins, & Idson, 1998).

This finding adequately agrees with practically observable consumer dispositions and as such can be regarded as providing information that is consistent with acceptable knowledge. The finding also agrees with Foster et al (2001) who posit that individuals who desire to make advancement in their life and career are more inclined to change their behavior by merely reflecting upon future hopes and aspirations which affords many benefits. Based on the foregoing, this study asserts that a strong and positive relationship exists between advancement inclinations and patronage intention in the banking industry in Rivers State.

A weak but positive relationship exists between advancement inclination and University Staff's patronage action in the banking industry Rivers State

This finding is confirmed by the position of customers at the choice (patronage action) stage in the consumer behavior, in which they may choose a product but fail to make the actual purchase. This means that enlightened consumers are skeptical when it comes to committing their financial resources in products until they are certain about the benefits derivable from the product.

This finding is in conformity with that of Liang and Lai (2002) who examined decision making of consumers in the online environment and found that internet consumers may choose a product online but decide to make the actual purchase from a different retailing format. Also, Bizrate.com (2000) confirmed this proposition through a research work which showed that 78% of shoppers abandon their online shopping carts; that is, fail to make the actual purchase. Hence, we are justified in our submission that a weak but positive relationship exists between advancement inclination and patronage action of customers in the banking industry Rivers State.

A significant and positive correlation between advancement inclination and university staff's repeat purchase in the banking industry in Rivers State

This discovery agrees with good judgment based on the fact that individuals who yearn to advance or consider making further progress in life are usually motivated to purchase products that enable them actualize that dream. However, according to Titus and Everett (1995), not being able to locate the desired product may have negative influence on consumers' emotions which may lead them to abandon the shopping process or withdraw patronage from a particular bank. It is the desired product as conceptualized by the customer that should bring about proper alignment with ideal selves based on dreams and aspirations (Lwin and Wirtz, 2007) and hence, the rejection of bank products when non-alignment is experienced. Therefore, our finding is congruent with existing knowledge. Thus, we aver that there is a significant and positive correlation between advancement inclination and repeat purchase in the banking industry in Rivers State.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the empirical tests carried out and the discussion of findings, this paper concludes that advancement inclination behaviors influence university lecturers' patronage of Deposit Money Banks in Rivers State. Customers' advancement inclination behaviors determine academic staff patronage intention, patronage action and repeat purchase in the banking industry.

We, therefore, recommend that for any Deposit Money Bank operating in Rivers State to be effective in designing appropriate strategies that can enable it obtain the University lecturers' patronage, it should have a good grasp of these lecturers' advancement inclination behaviors. Knowledge of this will most likely result in optimal repeat purchase, patronage intention and patronage action, which in turn, can boost the financial performance of the bank.

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