

**The 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Economics and Social Sciences**  
**Exploring Global Perspectives:**  
**The Future of Economics and Social Sciences**  
**June 5-6, 2025**  
**Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania**

**The Impact of Visual Content on Marketing Strategies:  
A Conceptual Approach Based on the VISCOM Model**

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DOI: 10.24818/ICESS/2025/039

**Abstract**

*With the rapid rise of digitalisation, visual content has become a strategic component of marketing communication. In brand interactions through social media and digital platforms, visuals are no longer merely attention-grabbing elements; they also serve as powerful tools for building emotional connections, shaping brand perception, and driving consumer engagement. This study analyses the impact of visual content on marketing strategies in a systematic manner and proposes an original conceptual framework called the VISCOM – Visual Communication. The VISCOM Model identifies four key dimensions of visual content: content quality, brand consistency, emotional engagement, and shareability. It aims to explain the direct and indirect effects of these elements on performance indicators such as consumer perception, brand loyalty, and digital interaction. The model's components are supported by an extensive literature review, and its practical implications in strategic marketing are discussed in detail. VISCOM provides a guiding framework, particularly for professionals working in digital marketing, content management, and social media strategy. The model's core assumption is that visual content should not be viewed merely as an aesthetic element, but as a strategic and measurable communication tool. In this sense, VISCOM contributes to the theoretical literature, while also offering a structural foundation for future empirical research.*

**Keywords:** visual content, marketing strategy, digital marketing, VISCOM model.

**1. Introduction**

In today's digital world, the production and consumption of information have become predominantly visual. Consumers are shifting away from text-based content and gravitating toward visual materials that are attention-grabbing, easily perceived, and capable of fostering emotional connections. In this context, visual communication has become an indispensable component of marketing strategies.

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The persuasive power of visuals in shaping consumer behaviour underscores that how a brand looks can be just as important as what it says (Messaris, 1996). With the rise of social media, digital advertising, and e-commerce platforms, the impact of visual content has grown significantly, making its strategic planning a critical success factor in marketing communication.

The contribution of visual content to marketing strategies extends beyond mere aesthetic appeal. An effective visual captures the audience's attention, evokes emotional engagement, reinforces brand identity, and enhances shareability among users. However, to systematically assess this multi-layered impact of visual content, theoretical models are required. At this point, the VISCOM model proposed in this study aims to analyse the influence of visual content on marketing through four key dimensions: content quality, brand consistency, emotional engagement, and shareability.

Content quality refers to the technical and aesthetic adequacy of a visual. Elements such as high resolution, proper composition, and colour harmony enhance a visual's clarity and credibility (Barry, 1997). When visual content is aligned with the brand identity, it helps build a strong image in the consumer's mind. This consistency strengthens brand recognition and trust (Aaker, 1996). Emotional engagement denotes a visual's capacity to elicit emotions in the viewer, playing a central role in fostering consumer loyalty and purchase intention (Kotler et al., 2016). Finally, shareability determines the potential of content to spread in digital environments, allowing the brand message to reach broader audiences (Berger & Milkman, 2012).

These four elements in the VISCOM model are interrelated in dynamic ways. A high-quality visual that aligns with the brand fosters trust, which, in turn, facilitates emotional connection and increases the likelihood of users sharing the content. Accordingly, the VISCOM model offers a comprehensive analytical framework to evaluate the impact of visual content on marketing strategies.

Although the literature includes significant studies on the relationship between visual communication and marketing, there is a scarcity of research that examines this relationship through a systematic model such as VISCOM. For instance, while Messaris (1996) highlights the persuasive nature of visuals, he does not explore the link between content quality and brand perception. Similarly, Berger and Milkman (2012) emphasise the relationship between emotional arousal and content virality, but do not address factors such as visual consistency or quality. Therefore, the VISCOM model has the potential to make a meaningful contribution to the existing body of knowledge.

This study conceptually examines the impact of visual content on marketing strategies based on the VISCOM model, providing a foundation for future qualitative, quantitative, and experimental research. First, the relationship between visual communication and marketing is outlined through a review of relevant literature. Then, each component of the VISCOM model is discussed in detail, followed by a visual representation of the model and its interrelated elements.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The VISCOM Model highlights four fundamental dimensions of visual content: content quality, brand consistency, emotional engagement, and shareability. Its primary objective is to elucidate both the direct and indirect effects of these dimensions on performance metrics such as consumer perception, brand loyalty, and digital interaction. The components of the model are thoroughly supported by a comprehensive review of existing literature, which provides a robust theoretical foundation. Furthermore, the model's practical applications in strategic marketing are explored in depth, offering insights into how these visual elements influence consumer behaviour and brand performance in the digital age.

### ***2.1 The Role of Visual Communication in Marketing***

Marketing communication increasingly leverages the strategic power of visual content to facilitate the interaction between brands and consumers. The capacity of visuals to be processed rapidly, to trigger emotional responses, and to convey messages more effectively than text has made them indispensable tools in the digital age (Lester, 2013). Particularly in today's digital environment, characterised by diminishing attention spans, the instant impact of visual content offers a significant competitive advantage for brands.

Visual communication in marketing goes beyond mere aesthetics or attention-grabbing qualities; it is fundamentally linked to the production of meaning. Visuals generate associations in the consumer's mind concerning brand identity, product value, and patterns of consumption (Schroeder, 2006). The meaning derived from these images depends on how such visual elements as colour, composition, form, and symbols align with cultural codes and elicit emotional states within the target audience. For instance, minimalist designs are often associated with simplicity and elegance, while vibrant colours can evoke a sense of energy and youthfulness. Therefore, visual communication is not only about what is shown, but also about how it is shown (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

The strategic role of visual content becomes particularly salient within digital media channels. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest, due to their visually driven structures, encourage users to engage with content more intensively and emotionally (Peters et al., 2013). High-quality and original visuals shared on these platforms not only enhance brand visibility but also influence user behaviour in terms of content sharing. A study by De Veirman et al. (2017) found that high-resolution, aesthetically coherent images on Instagram receive 67% more likes and are more frequently shared than lower-quality visuals.

Visual communication serves not only to influence consumers, but also to articulate a brand's identity and core values. Whether through corporate identity design, advertising campaigns, or product packaging, visuals play a central role in embodying and projecting a brand's character and market positioning. As such, visual consistency becomes critical in establishing brand credibility (Henderson

et al., 2003). A coherent visual language fosters sustainable engagement with consumers and enhances brand recognition over time.

With advancements in digital technologies, the modes of visual production and consumption are also undergoing transformation. AI-assisted tools now enable brands to generate personalised content tailored to specific target audiences, while emerging technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) enrich the visual experience by making it more interactive and immersive (Wedel & Kannan, 2016). These developments suggest that visual communication is no longer a static transmission of messages but rather a dynamic, participatory experience shared with the user.

Taken together, these elements illustrate how visual communication has become central to contemporary marketing practice. The deliberate integration of visual elements within both strategic planning and creative execution plays a decisive role in securing competitive advantage. In this context, theoretical models such as VISCOM offer a structured framework for systematically analysing the impact of visual content and informing strategic decision-making.

## ***2.2 VISCOM Model: Conceptual Foundations***

The VISCOM model is based on four fundamental components. These are defined as content quality, brand consistency, emotional engagement, and shareability. The VISCOM model will be explained through these four concepts.

### ***2.2.1 Content Quality***

Content quality is one of the key factors determining the effectiveness of visual communication within marketing strategies. A high-quality visual is not only aesthetically pleasing, but also stands out by clearly conveying its message, establishing an emotional and cognitive connection with the target audience, and reflecting brand values. In this context, content quality should be evaluated based on multidimensional criteria such as image resolution, composition, colour harmony, narrative coherence, and technical accuracy (Barry, 1997).

The quality of visual content has a direct impact on perceived consumer value. High-quality visuals lead to the perception of a product or brand as more prestigious, trustworthy, and professional (Lichtenstein et al., 1993). Particularly in digital marketing, users' initial reactions to content are often based on visual quality. Poorly designed or amateur visuals can create a negative impression and potentially damage brand image (Schindler & Kibarian, 2001). This issue extends beyond aesthetics; quality also relates to the visual's functionality, legibility, and effectiveness in delivering the intended message.

Ensuring a high standard of visual content offers a significant advantage in achieving marketing goals. Research has shown that advertising campaigns supported by high-quality visuals attract greater consumer attention and enhance brand recall (Pieters et al., 2010). For example, high-resolution and professionally composed visuals used in luxury product promotions can elevate perceived value

and reduce price sensitivity. Similarly, in e-commerce, high-quality product images have been found to significantly increase conversion rates (Kim & Lennon, 2008).

Content quality is not limited to technical proficiency; it is also closely linked to narrative and contextual integrity. A quality visual is not merely something that “looks good,” but one that conveys a meaningful, contextually appropriate, and audience-optimised message. Therefore, content quality should be considered both a creative and functional component within the scope of marketing strategies (Belch & Belch, 2018).

The quality of visual content also influences the algorithmic visibility on digital platforms. On visually driven platforms such as Instagram and Pinterest, high-quality content tends to receive greater exposure, while AI-powered content ranking systems often deprioritise lower-quality visuals (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). This demonstrates that content quality is not only associated with user perception but is also directly related to digital reach strategies. Considering this, content quality constitutes the cornerstone of the VISCOM model. High-quality visual content provides a solid foundation that enhances the impact of other components; namely, brand consistency, emotional engagement, and shareability. In contrast, when content quality is low, the effectiveness of these components tends to diminish. Therefore, it is recommended that quality standards be defined in the content production process, visual design teams be guided by qualitative benchmarks, and performance measurement systems be structured to include these quality criteria.

### *2.2.2 Brand Consistency*

Brand consistency plays a critical role in shaping a solid, reliable, and sustainable brand perception in the minds of consumers. Visual content serves as a fundamental tool in establishing this perception, functioning both as the first impression and as a long-term memory cue for the brand. A consistent visual identity reinforces the brand’s values, personality, and positioning over time, thus strengthening the relationship between the target audience and the brand (Aaker, 1996).

Brand consistency in visual communication is achieved through the uniform presentation of elements such as colour palettes, typography, logo usage, design language, photography style, and overall aesthetic codes across all touchpoints. This consistency not only ensures design integrity but also fosters a sense of trust and familiarity (Keller, 2003). Especially in digital platforms where users are exposed to a high volume of visual stimuli, prior experiences allow for quicker brand recognition and emotional connection. The sustainability of this bond depends heavily on the visual identity’s consistency over time (Lee et al., 2020).

Consistency also supports the credibility of the brand promise. For example, if an environmentally conscious brand communicates its sustainable production processes but uses visuals that depict plastic packaging or overly industrial scenes, it sends a conflicting message to its audience. Such contradictions can undermine brand trust and adversely affect brand loyalty (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003). Thus, it is essential for visual content to align meaningfully with the brand’s value proposition.

Brand consistency is equally critical in multi-channel communication strategies. Maintaining a coherent visual language across traditional media, digital platforms, and social media enhances the overall impact of communication (Kapferer, 2012). Visual elements used in social media posts must be aligned with the brand's overarching aesthetic. This requires coordinated efforts among content creators, digital marketing teams, and creative agencies.

A lack of consistency may lead to ambiguity in brand perception. Research shows that visually inconsistent campaigns are associated with perceptions of low quality and trustworthiness in the minds of consumers (Meyers-Levy & Tybout, 1989). Conversely, brands with consistent visual identities tend to be more easily recognised, enjoy higher ad recall, and foster stronger brand loyalty (Erdem & Swait, 1998).

Visual consistency also necessitates a strategic balance for global brands operating across cultures. The relationship between maintaining universal brand codes and respecting local cultural differences calls for both consistency and adaptability in visual communication (de Mooij, 2014). Therefore, international brands must ensure that their visual strategies reflect global brand values while also addressing the aesthetic and cultural expectations of local consumers. Based on these considerations, brand consistency can be seen as representing the "stability" dimension of visual strategy within the VISCOM model. The impact of other components such as content quality, emotional engagement, and shareability can only become meaningful and sustainable when supported by this consistency. In this context, it is recommended that brands develop a visual identity guide and adhere strictly to it throughout all content production and dissemination processes.

### *2.2.3 Emotional Engagement*

Emotional engagement is one of the key factors that maximises the impact of visual content in marketing. Consumers respond to information not only through cognitive processes but also through emotional reactions. Visuals are extremely powerful tools in triggering emotions and establishing an emotional bond between the brand and the user (Mick & Buhl, 1992). In this context, designing visual content in a way that appeals to the emotional world of the target audience directly affects brand perception and consumer behaviour.

Emotional engagement ensures not only the recognition of a brand by consumers, but also its affection, trust, and adoption. Especially on interaction-based platforms such as social media, visual content that generates high emotional impact is more likely to be shared and commented on (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Emotional responses play a significant role in capturing attention, increasing the duration of exposure to the content, and ensuring permanence in consumer memory (Poels & Dewitte, 2006).

Creating emotional impact in visual content is mostly achieved through elements such as colour usage, facial expressions, metaphorical images, and storytelling. For example, it is known that warm colours (red, orange) evoke feelings of excitement and passion, while cool colours (blue, green) create a sense of trust and calmness

(Labrecque & Milne, 2013). Moreover, visuals featuring human faces allow for faster empathy with users. In particular, details such as eye contact and facial expressions increase the level of emotional engagement (Lewinski et al., 2014).

Visuals with a story are among the most effective tools for increasing emotional engagement. Visual storytelling not only allows consumers to consume the content but also to experience it. Such narratives help the target audience develop a positive attitude toward the brand by presenting the brand's values in an emotional context (Escalas, 2004). It has been observed that a storytelling approach increases emotional impact, especially in content where brands emphasise concepts such as "meaning" and "purpose."

Emotional engagement also plays a central role in shaping the consumer experience. Brands that establish an emotional connection establish customer bases with higher levels of loyalty. Research shows that consumers' loyalty to a brand is shaped by emotional bonds beyond rational benefits (Thomson et al., 2005). Therefore, systematically designing the emotional dimension in visual content strategies is important for increasing long-term brand value.

However, emotional content production should not only focus on creating strong emotions but also ensure that these emotions are consistent with the brand identity. Overly dramatised, exaggerated, or insincere content may create the opposite effect on the target audience and result in a perception of "emotional manipulation" (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). For this reason, emotional engagement strategies should be structured in an authentic, sincere manner that can empathise with the target audience. Based on this, emotional engagement can be seen in the VISCOM model as the layer in which the psychological bond between the brand and the consumer is established and maintained. Emotional engagement, when used together with other components, greatly enhances the impact of the visual communication strategy. Marketing professionals should understand the emotional tendencies of the target audience and produce visual content that reflects these tendencies, presenting them in a consistent, high-quality, and shareable way.

#### *2.2.4 Shareability*

Shareability is one of the most important factors determining the potential spread of visual content on social media and digital platforms. In the digital age, content is not only consumed but also shared, commented on, and often repurposed by users. In this context, the impact of visual content in marketing strategies is not limited to the initial point of contact; the more users the content reaches, the more brand visibility and potential interactions it creates (Berger & Milkman, 2012).

Shareability requires content production to be strategically planned. Research has shown that people's motivations for sharing content are primarily based on factors such as social affiliation, self-expression, providing value to others, and creating emotional impact (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). Therefore, brands should structure visual content in a way that addresses these psychological needs of users.

Key characteristics that enhance the shareability of visual content include aesthetic appeal, informational value, humorous elements, emotional intensity, and social messages. Especially short videos, infographics, and attention-grabbing visuals are more frequently recommended by social media algorithms and circulate more among users (Kümpel et al., 2015). This directly influences the viral potential of the content.

Shareability is not only related to the content format but also to the content context. The timeliness of the content, its association with a specific agenda, or its alignment with the target audience's lifestyle, values, and expectations increases the likelihood of sharing (Dobele et al., 2007). For example, visual content for a social responsibility campaign becomes more shareable when it evokes empathy and a sense of support in the target audience.

Additionally, shareability is related to the technical accessibility and usability of the content. Elements such as image size, resolution, mobile compatibility, and support through captions or explanatory texts can influence users' decision to share the content (Calder et al., 2009). Given that mobile user experience constitutes a significant portion of content consumption today, shareable designs are becoming more prominent.

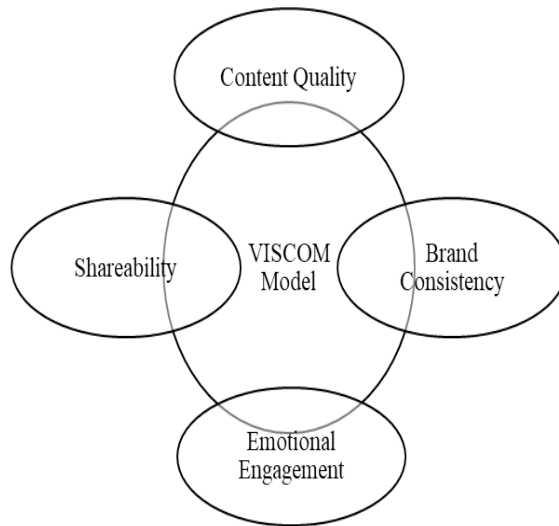
For brands, developing a shareable content strategy means not only increasing distribution but also enabling users to carry the brand message to their own social networks. This opens the door to "user-generated content." When users share their own experiences with a brand, it facilitates organic spread and increases brand credibility (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). This effect, particularly through micro and nano influencers, can spread in a more authentic and interactive way. Based on these explanations, shareability has the potential to fulfil the function of expanding the influence of visual content within the VISCOM model. Content being shareable not only increases digital visibility but also transforms users into voluntary brand ambassadors. Therefore, when developing content strategies, brands should focus not only on what they are saying but also on how and by whom their message can be spread.

### **3. Methodology**

In the digitalised marketing world, visual content is not just about eye-catching elements; it has also become the cornerstone of strategic communication. In this context, the VISCOM model developed systematises the integration of visual content with marketing strategies through four basic components: content quality, brand consistency, emotional engagement, and shareability. The structure formed by the combination of these components ensures that visual communication strategies are both effective and sustainable. The interaction of the four variables that make up the model is shown in the figure below.

The holistic structure of the VISCOM model reveals that each component gains significance not only within its own context but also through its interaction with other components. For instance, high content quality lays the groundwork for emotional engagement, while brand consistency enhances the credibility of this emotional content. Similarly, shareability is made possible not only by being attention-grabbing but also because of high-quality, consistent, and emotionally compelling content (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Therefore, the VISCOM model treats these four dimensions as inseparable from one another.

**Figure 1. VISCOM model**

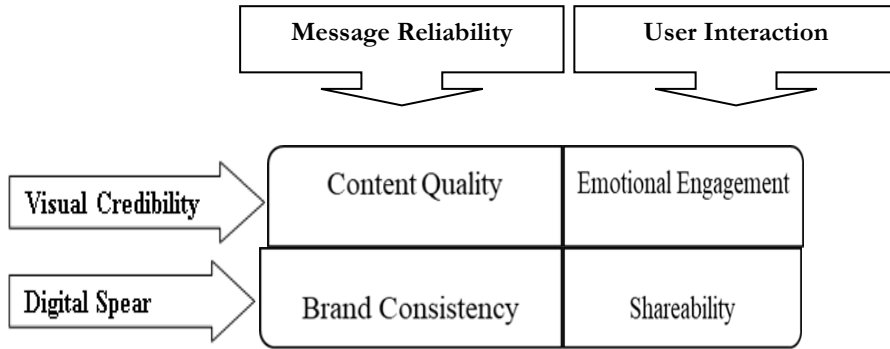


*Source:* authors' own creation.

The integration of the model with visual content strategies goes beyond merely attracting the target audience's attention and aims at fostering long-term brand loyalty. In this context, content quality represents visual integrity and clarity of the message, while brand consistency ensures that the content aligns with the corporate identity. Emotional engagement creates an insightful connection with the target audience, while shareability enhances the social circulation capacity and reach effect of the content (Poels & Dewitte, 2006; Escalas, 2004).

To illustrate these relationships, a proposed schematic model positions the VISCOM components in a 2x2 matrix, visually representing their interactions. For example, content quality and brand consistency form the “message reliability” dimension, which nurtures visual credibility, while emotional engagement and shareability converge on the “user interaction” axis, supporting digital diffusion. This structured model presents both conceptual and practical considerations for strategic content production. The matrix that constitutes the structured model is shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. VISCOM model matrix**



*Source: authors' own creation.*

The integration of the model into marketing communication processes is multi-layered. First, VISCOM functions as a checklist that guides the content production process. The visual quality of the content, its compliance with the brand language, whether it creates the targeted emotional response, and whether it is prepared in shareable formats suitable for social media algorithms can be evaluated through this model (Calder et al., 2009). In addition, separate analyses can be made according to VISCOM components in measuring campaign performances and strategies can be optimised considering this data. Today's marketing communication no longer aims for the consumer to be only informed; it also aims for them to be emotional, to interact, and to own the content. The VISCOM model provides a multi-dimensional framework that meets this transformation and ensures that visual content is evaluated not only as an aesthetic but also as a strategic element (Labrecque & Milne, 2013). Especially in social media-based campaigns, this model can be a functional roadmap for brands that want to establish the relationship between the user and the brand on an emotional level and to exhibit an effective presence on digital platforms. In this context, the VISCOM model can increase the capacity of brands to produce effective content in the digital age by making the integration of visual communication with marketing strategies systematic and measurable. Although each component of the model is valuable on its own, the real power emerges from the synchronised and strategic use of these four elements. In this way, brand communication not only attracts attention; it also builds trust, establishes an emotional bond, and gains visibility in social circulation.

#### 4. Conclusions

The communication dynamics of the digital age have necessitated a redefinition of the relationship between brands and their target audiences. In this transformation, visual content has become not only an aesthetic preference, but also a strategic necessity. Centred on the power of visual communication, the VISCOM model offers a holistic and systematic approach to marketing communication, presenting a new roadmap for brands in content creation and management processes. This study

conceptually demonstrates how the VISCOM model, constructed through the components of content quality, brand consistency, emotional engagement, and shareability, can be integrated with visual content strategies.

Research indicates that the impact of visual content on the recipient is not limited to information transfer; it can also generate emotional, behavioural, and social responses (Malthouse et al., 2013; Poels & Dewitte, 2006). In this context, the VISCOM model provides a functional framework for understanding and optimising these effects. Content quality is a fundamental requirement in terms of the message's perceptibility and seriousness, while brand consistency ensures the integration of content with the corporate identity and values. Emotional engagement allows the consumer to connect with and internalise the content, while shareability enables the reproduction of this interaction in the social domain (Berger & Milkman, 2012; Escalas, 2004).

One of the model's most significant contributions is its emphasis on the interconnectedness of these four components. Content gains strategic value not only when it is of high quality, but also when it is consistent with the brand, emotionally engaging, and shareable. This holistic approach allows the VISCOM model to be used not only as a theoretical tool but also as a practical instrument in marketing communication. Particularly in digital campaign planning, the model provides opportunities for control and evaluation across multiple stages, from content creation to performance measurement (Calder et al., 2009).

The integration of the model into marketing communication processes can transform it into a strategic decision support system for both content creators and brand managers. For instance, when planning a campaign, the VISCOM components can be evaluated separately to identify gaps. Likewise, social media analyses and feedback can be coded within these four dimensions to understand which aspects of the content are successful or inadequate (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). This approach provides a significant advantage, especially for brands working with a data-driven marketing mindset.

In this regard, a more in-depth academic examination of the VISCOM model, particularly supported by qualitative, quantitative, and experimental research, is recommended. The model's validity across different industries, its level of flexibility in various cultural contexts, and its performance depending on content types (video, infographic, animation, visual storytelling, etc.) present a valuable framework for future research. Furthermore, how user-generated content aligns with these four components could also be explored in a separate study.

In conclusion, this study presents the VISCOM model as a conceptual proposal and demonstrates how it can provide a structure for the strategic management of visual content. In an era of accelerated digitalisation, where users have become content creators, it is critical for brands to focus not only on attention-grabbing content but also on creating meaningful, consistent, emotional, and shareable content as a sustainable communication strategy. The VISCOM model, as a holistic approach that addresses this need, has the potential to contribute both academically and practically.

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