

Customer Relationship Management of Department of Tourism (DOT) Accredited Hotels in Angeles City, Philippines

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Abstract:

The high level of competition existing in the marketplace especially in the hotel industry requires each player to seek ways to augment its level of relationship with their clientele. The high degree of substitution and low level of switching costs means that every hotel must learn to create an atmosphere of customer relations. Thus the study aims to identify the level of customer relationship management (CRM) of Department of Tourism (DOT) Accredited Hotels in Angeles City, Philippines. Specifically it investigates the practice of CRM of DOT accredited hotels in Angeles City and their extent of CRM practices from the points of view of the hotel and its clients using six CRM capabilities of Wang and Feng (2012) namely customer interaction, customer upgrading, customer winback, customer orientation, CRM technology, and customer satisfaction. Through the use of descriptive method and ANOVA analysis, the research revealed that there is no significant difference between DOT accredited hotels and hotel clients in terms of CRM consciousness, and it is recommended that each hotel establishment should continue its present CRM practices. To further increase the satisfaction of hotel

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clients, it is an imperative for hotel players to continually update their establishment with the current trends in CRM for them to build lasting relationships with their customer, thus create profitability through loyalty in the long run.

Key words: Viral marketing, Facebook, marketing campaigns, World Wide Web, online advertisements and promotions

1. Introduction

The high level of competition in the market place requires every business firm to find ways to overcome and seek for solutions that can augment profitability and achieve success. One of the critical factors in achieving organization's success is how to create lasting relationships with customers both internal and external. Because of the intensity of competition, many Asian companies emphasize customer value. The idea is basically getting loyal customers through unique value creation. The very essence of successful marketing is simply building long-term customer relationships to deliver unique value that they alone can provide to targeted markets (Kerin et al, 2009).

In the evolution of market orientation, the customer relation era highlights market orientation, a marketing concept that focuses on the organization's efforts on continuous collection of customer needs' information, information sharing across departments, and creation of customer value (Narver, Slater, & Tietje, 1998; Slater & Narver, 1995; Day, 1994). The consequence of this idea in today's organizations is the incessant satisfaction of augmented customer expectations (Kerin et al, 2009). Furthermore, a vital outgrowth of this focus on the customer is the current attention placed on customer relationship management (CRM). The idea of CRM is the identification of potential buyers, understanding them closely and personally, and the creation of positive long-term perceptions of the firm and its product/service offerings so that

the potential buyers will choose them (Srivastara, Shervani, & Fahey, 1999). It also focuses on strategies and tools that reorient the totality of a business organization to concentrate on customer satisfaction (Boone and Kurtz, 2011). As Armstrong and Kotler (2013) define CRM, it is the sum process of establishing and sustaining profitable customer relationships through superior delivery of customer value and satisfaction. CRM requires company managers and employees to be involved and be committed to the process (Rigby, Reichheld, & Scheffer, 2002; Kerin et al, 2009). Generally, the broad goal of any CRM strategy is to create more profitable customer relationships (Buttle, 2004).

According to Kerin et al (2009), they argued that Asian marketers are rediscovering today the old concept of “every customer is unique, has unique wants and needs, and desires special tender loving care from the seller – the essence of customer relationship management” (p.247). In the present times, the use of CRM software is pervasive. Many organizations utilize CRM to connect all the databases throughout the company. Information entered by one segment or department of the business is readily accessible to everyone who has access to the said database. Because firms expect a huge amount of useful customer information, CRM can be a tool to please these customers (Humphrey, 2011), thus possibility of increasing customer retention. According to Buttle (2004), managing customer retention generates two important benefits. One is, the firm’s costs on marketing are reduced. The second benefit is, as tenure grows, suppliers better understand the requirements of customers.

2. Purpose of the Study

Basically, the study investigated the practice of CRM of DOT accredited hotels in Angeles City and their extent of CRM practices from the points of view of the hotel and its clients.

From the work of Wang and Feng (2012), there are six capabilities considered in the undertaking namely: customer interaction, customer upgrading, customer winback, customer orientation, CRM technology, and customer satisfaction.

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between DOT Accredited Hotels in Angeles City and Hotel Clients in terms of CRM consciousness.

The study can provide useful information to hotel owners and local government unit (LGU's) tourism office. The output of the undertaking will be useful in improving hotel owners and employees' relationship with their respective clients. The Department of Tourism (DOT) will also gain insights on the level of CRM practices in the hotel sector because it can impact on the tourism industry at large.

3. Literature Review

CRM has been defined by various authors in different manner. Kumar and Reinartz (2006) explained CRM as "the strategic process of selecting the customers a firm can most profitably serve and shaping the interactions between that company and these customers with the goal of optimizing the current and future value of the customers for the company" (p.5). Chen and Popovich (2003) for instance defined CRM as something that maximized relationships through a cross-functional, customer-driven, and technology - integrated business process management. Rigby, Reichheld, Schefter (2002) identified CRM has to do with providing customized products and services to augment customer loyalty by means of gathering customer data swiftly and identification of most valuable customers through time. Mckenzie (2001) argued that CRM aims at focusing attention on customers through a combination of strategy and information systems.

The idea of customer relationship management is not a recent notion. Even the ancient merchants and traders knew

that building relationships with customers is a good thing for it will keep them coming back (Jobber, 2001). According to Bose (2002), CRM was an easier task to accomplish during the early phases of commerce. He further argued that, due to the expansion and growth of the different firms through times, information about customers became so tedious to do because of the increasing needs and wants of each target market. On his assessment, he mentioned that, to deal with the expansion of customer bases, market segmentation necessitates to group customers into specific segments based on their individual desires and wants. With this marketing tool, the requirements and expectations of each segment may possibly be met but problem arises due to the fact that the focus now is on the groups not on the individuals.

Another important concept to deal with CRM is value maximization. Value maximization or the process in which a firm maximizes profits while consumer maximizes utility or satisfaction was introduced by economists many decades ago. Today, the most common measure value maximization is CRM. Various proponents of CRM emphasize performance and customer value and in general creation of value to firm and customer. (Payne & Frow, 2005; Rogers, 2005; Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

In the context of Parvatiyar and Sheth (2001), CRM and relationship management in the field of marketing are used on similar context. These two marketing terms reflects different themes and perspectives and some of these themes provide a constricted functional marketing perspective. Fundamentally, other themes offer broad viewpoints and to some extent, paradigmatic in orientation and approach (Nevin, 1995).

“Customer selectivity” is another vital factor of CRM. This notion implies that not all customers can provide profits to individual firm (Storbacka, 2000). Parvatiyar and Sheth (2001) further explained that each firm must be selective in establishing marketing programs and tools through selection

and segmentation of customers for each marketing program. From the standpoint of the two mentioned authors, CRM was defined as “a comprehensive strategy and process of acquiring, retaining, and partnering with selective customers to create superior value for the company and the customer. It involves the integration of marketing, sales, customer service, and the supply-chain functions of the organization to achieve greater efficiencies and effectiveness in delivering customer value” (p.5). Vitally, the definition captures the idea that CRM means improvement in marketing productivity. This can only be attained by increasing the marketing efficiency and by enhancing marketing effectiveness (Parvatiyar and Sheth, 2001).

Programs geared toward CRM became great deals of interest in 1990s as an information technology (IT) tool that can be utilized in customer information collection and sharing. Customer retention was the fundamental goal of CRM programs. CRM programs include the identification of organization’s customers, differentiation of customers in terms of needs and overall value to the firm, efficient interaction with customers, and customization of interactions with customers (Clow & Baack, 2010). Customer relationship management, enabled by technology, can provide firms countless opportunities to personalize products for their target market. CRM tools and software can give vast amount of data and deliver explicit recommendations for personalizing customer contacts (Timm, 2011).

According to Peelen (2005), the four cornerstone of CRM are customer knowledge, relationship strategy, communication and the individual value proposition. CRM is also viewed in three levels namely: strategic, operational, and analytical. Strategic CRM is a top-down perspective in which CRM is viewed as a core customer-centric strategy in business targeting and keeping profitable customers. On one hand, operational CRM emphasizes on automation projects, sales force

automation, or marketing automation. The third level, which is analytical CRM, is a bottom-up viewpoint which stresses on the intelligent mining of customer data for strategic or tactical purposes (Buttle, 2004).

According to Chen and Popovich (2003), people, processes, and technology are the primary factors of CRM which seeks to understand customers. In order for the business to operate effectively, customers are important factors (Kim et al, 2012). Kale (2004) argued that, in order to achieve competitive advantage, developing and maintaining relationships to customers is a necessity. On one hand, Yang (2003) mentioned that service quality can be improved through CRM which reflects an important strategy for improving competitiveness.

According to Sin, Tse, and Yim (2005), the most important benchmark of competitive advantage is CRM and further stressed out that it has a positive impact on the performance of organization. The success of a business organization lies on CRM effectiveness (Mehta, Sharma, & Mehta, 2010). Because of stiff competition, globalization, customer retention, complexity of the marketplace, and other issues, CRM has been a vital force to deal with all these occurrences.

The impact of CRM on customer satisfaction was evaluated by Mithas, Krishnan, and Fornell (2005). In their study, they observed the effect of CRM on customer knowledge and customer satisfaction. From their analysis, it showed that firms that utilize CRM applications are positively related with improved customer knowledge and improved customer satisfaction. They further pointed out that gains from customer knowledge are improved when firms share their information pertaining to customer with their partners in the supply chain. Zamil (2011) even argued that CRM as a strategy can sustain the name of the business and the products it offers in the minds of its customers. He identified the factors that affect customer

behaviour toward the brand and the business. His findings include the fact the human resources management activities are the primary factors in brand name retention on the mind of a customer. His study also confirmed that CRM is a complex concept requiring right business process and system integration. He also mentioned that effective leadership, sourcing, communication, and evaluation are necessary in adopting CRM. Lombard (2011) investigated customer retention through CRM by means of a two-way communication and conflict handling. The result of this study implied that a short-term insurance firm can improve and maintain its relationships between the organization and customers given that the said firm communicates information to customers with efficiency, effectiveness, and accuracy. The author also suggested that conflicts should be handled in a manner in which the firm listens well to its customers. Saldanha and Krishnan (2011) however analysed business intelligence and CRM for customer involvement in developing product and service. Their findings averred that business intelligence and CRM can facilitate firms in orienting their customers particularly the extent in which firms implicate customers in developing products and services. They also found out the business intelligence and CRM are positively related which implies that business intelligence can leverage rich and integrated customer transaction information provided by CRM. The field of CRM encompasses many areas of marketing and strategic decisions. The prominence of CRM today incorporates various paradigms and perspectives of marketing and by the initiatives of the corporation. The sphere of CRM has been shaped around cooperation and collaboration of organizational units and the firm's stakeholders, including its clientele. CRM is likely to develop as a new marketing perspective. It is also noteworthy to say the CRM is not all about software solution or always related to IT. CRM is way beyond this perception (Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2001).

CRM has also the power to enhance product quality and customer satisfaction as examined by Agus and Hassan (2012). They argued that “CRM and quality are two faces of the same coin” (p.106). They further noted that CRM is about serving while quality is about creation and CRM connects the competitive cycle of customer feedback into the marketing process methodically and contributes to firm’s competitiveness. Freeman and Seddon (2005) mentioned the benefits work systems based on CRM. The benefits include access and capture customer information, increased productivity from headcount reductions and other process efficiencies, integration processes, data, and technology, increased sales activities, and more personalized and responsive service to customers. On one hand, Gholami and Rahman (2012) further averred that “CRM is an enterprise-wide approach that focuses on customer-centric model that should be set up around the customer. Hence, it is a collection of micro and macro analysis as continuous effort that needs reshaping core business processes starting from customer side and connecting customer feedback. Consequently, CRM covers managerial, personal, technical, and economical aspects in the micro analysis, as well as government/standards, environment, and technology related aspects as macro analysis in order to the finally outcome that lead to the dual value creation in the cycle of CRM perspectives, enablers, and business performance” (p.101).

Rababah, Mohd, and Ibrahim (2011) reviewed extensively CRM literatures to supplement the understanding and perspectives, and processes of CRM. Their undertaking revealed that there are four essential factors on CRM processes. These are customer facing level processes, customer-oriented processes, cross-functional CRM processes, and CRM macro-level processes. These four perspectives are different but integrated in such a way that they are playing complementary roles in targeting CRM initiatives. They added that understanding the different CRM-process levels and

integrating activities among CRM processes at each level, ensures the successful adoption and implementation of any CRM initiative. Understanding the need for business-process reengineering and effective anticipation, and management of change that may accompany CRM initiatives is required for firms to be successful adopters and implementers of programs or systems on CRM.

In the hotel industry, CRM is very important. Chains of hotels operating locally, nationally, or globally need to incorporate CRM in their overall operations (Luck and Lancaster, 2013). Since hotel industry is a people-oriented industry, the integration of CRM with the hotel systems is necessary to build lasting relationships with customers. According to Nikolis (2009) the utilization of CRM strategies can lead to customer loyalty and retention. He further averred that CRM implementations allow hotel establishments to customize the stay of their loyal and valued guests as well as create loyalty rates for clients who continuously spend quality time and financial resource with the hotel.

One of the researches done about CRM and hotel industry was the work of Mohammed and Rashid (2012). Their study clarified the relationship of the dimensions of CRM and the performance of hotels. They also explained the mediation role of marketing capabilities in the mentioned relationship. Their undertaking established a theoretical model in which the CRM dimensions, marketing capabilities, and hotel performance has a relationship with a firm. Their conceptual framework model of the influence of CRM dimensions on hotel performance is based from a resource view which suggests that the performance of the firm is influenced by its internal resources and capabilities. One of the interesting findings of this research is the fact the it raises awareness among hotel management people to pay attention to CRM dimensions and marketing capabilities because these two vital factors are necessary to achieve performance and competitiveness of any

hotel establishment. Furthermore, Luck and Lancaster (2013) identified how CRM can be a strategic answer to hotel establishments or simply part of their tactics. The findings of their study focused on the essence of the environment focused on customers and how hotel establishments can benefit from a strategic and focused approach to CRM. They also argued that “hotel companies have in evidence had recourse to elements of CRM for a variety of strategic and tactical reasons” (p55). They further reiterated that the success of a strategy depends on the company’s ability to deliver enhanced value in terms of specific needs and wants of the organization’s clientele. One of the key conclusions of their study is the importance of customer acquisition, customer retention, and customer account development in hotel establishments. Moreover, Lo, Stalcup, and Lee (2010) investigated how hotels are implementing CRM practices at the property level. Using the modified version of Buttle’s value chain of CRM, the study implied that all hotels they had studied have practices in place to manage customer relationships. They also mentioned that guest retention is the commonly cited CRM goal of hotels. They advanced that evaluation and control are perceived as vital activities in tracking the performance of the guest contact departments and the evaluations of customers of the hotel or restaurant experiences. Luck and Lancaster (2003) further analysed e-CRM in hotel industry in the United Kingdom. They explored the degree to which hotel groups had exploited e-CRM. Their findings suggested that hotel establishments used the Internet not to gather information but by building relationship with their customers. Majority of the hotel establishments had only comprised a few components of e-CRM and further indicated that they had no intention to being led online by the concept. Ahmad et al (2012) also investigated the impact of CRM on hotels. They attempted to find the factors that influence CRM of hotels in India. Their study revealed that there is an impact on implementing CRM in increasing customer trust in

UmaidBahwan (India). They also found out that there is an impact of implementing CRM on customer satisfaction and CRM has positive relationship on customer retention. On one hand, demographic variables have no significant relationship on the impact on CRM. Furthermore, Amoako et al (2012) studied the impact of CRM on repurchase of hotel guests. Customer loyalty and customer retention were evident in the hotel under study. The relationship between hotel guests and the hotel was positive. Corporate customers were also satisfied with the way the hotel provides services to them.

4. Paradigm of the Study

From all CRM literatures and studies, it is evident that CRM plays a vital role in improving any organization's performance. Likewise, most CRM proponents and scholars view CRM as a field that can establish customer satisfaction and customer retention if properly utilized and implemented.

Despite the disagreements in what CRM is about, its scope, its depth, its definition, still it is regarded as an important field of study where its application can be found across industries. Buttle (2004) for instance mentioned that there is still incongruity in CRM definition and meaning. Moreover, in terms of framework and/or components of CRM, there are no commonality in the degree of implementation and evaluation of CRM effectiveness practices (Sigala, 2005). Several authors and theorists provide different frameworks and components for CRM. The most interesting findings made for the past years was the work of Wang and Feng (2012) where they identified the six capabilities or elements of CRM. Their comprehensive study validly illustrated the key factors in CRM which are customer interaction, customer upgrading, customer winback, customer orientation, CRM technology, and customer satisfaction. Their framework was utilized by the researcher in

investigating the CRM practices of hotels in Angeles City and come up with strategic framework in dealing with CRM issues.

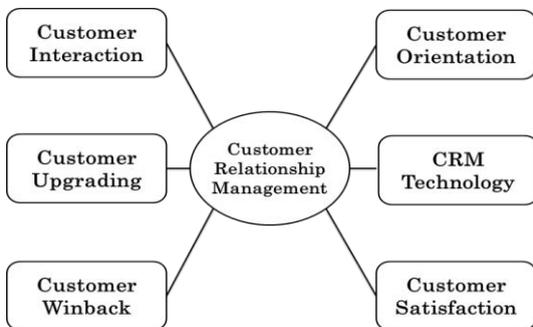


Figure 1. Paradigm of the Study

Through the perspectives of both the hotels and the hotel clients, a thorough scrutiny was made by the researcher to find the perceptual gaps between the perspectives. A strategic framework will be the basis in augmenting the level of CRM practices of DOT accredited hotels in Angeles City.

5. Method

Descriptive method was used in the study. According to Kumar (2005), descriptive research attempts to describe systematically a situation, problem, phenomenon, service or program, provides information or describes attitudes towards an issue. A 5-point Likert scale was used for items for factors customer interaction, customer upgrading, customer winback, customer orientation, and CRM technology. On the other hand, a 7-point Likert scale was used for customer satisfaction. An ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) analysis was also utilized to find out if there was significant difference between the CRM consciousness of the hotel establishments and the clients.

5.1. Participants

The participants of the study were hotel establishments in Angeles City. Since the undertaking deals with the analysis of the CRM practices of these establishments, the researcher identified CRM officers and/or related positions. Only the hotels registered and accredited by the DOT in the said study locale were investigated and studied by the researcher. Based on the DOT's official master list of accredited hotels in Angeles City, there are 21 hotels accredited classified according to deluxe class (highest classification), first class, standard class, and economy class (lowest classification). On one hand, hotel clients were also included in the research. The role of the hotel clients was their perceptions toward CRM of hotel establishments.

5.2. Measure

The survey questionnaire used in the study was adopted from Wang and Feng (2012) study entitled Customer relationship management capabilities: measurement, antecedents, and consequences. The survey was designed to measure the six capabilities or elements of CRM namely customer interaction, customer upgrading, customer winback, customer orientation, CRM technology, and customer satisfaction. The result of the survey was quantitatively presented using tables and graphs.

6. Results

Table 1 presents the result of CRM consciousness of DOT accredited hotels and hotel clients.

Table 1. Summary of the Relationship of CRM Consciousness between DOT Accredited Hotels and Hotel Clients

CRM Consciousness Variables	Weighted Mean	
	DOT Accredited	Hotel Clients
Customer Interaction	4.22	4.24
Customer Upgrading	4.22	4.20
Customer Winback	4.31	4.18

Customer Orientation	4.15	4.23
CRM Technology	4.10	4.13
Customer Satisfaction	5.72	5.93

The computed weighted means for the six (6) CRM consciousness variables reflect minimal difference or gap for DOT accredited hotels and hotel clients.

Table 2. Summary of Anova Analysis

<u>Anova: Single Factor</u>		<u>alpha level: 0.05</u>				
SUMMARY						
<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>	<i>Stand. Dev</i>	
DOT Accredited Hotels	5	21	4.2	0.00635	0.079686887	
Hotel Clients	5	20.98	4.196	0.00193	0.043931765	
ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	4E-05	1	4E-05	0.00966	0.924116565	5.317655072
Within Groups	0.03312	8	0.00414			
Total	0.03316	9				

Table 2 summarizes the level of CRM consciousness between DOT accredited hotels and clients. From the ANOVA analysis done at alpha level = 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted since the *F* statistic of 0.009661836 is lower than the *F* critical value of 5.317655072. This is also evident with the result of the p-value of 0.00966 which is lower than the alpha level of 0.05. The result of the ANOVA analysis excludes the last variable which is customer satisfaction since it used a 7-point Likert scale.

7. Discussions

The fundamental objective of this undertaking is to scrutinize the degree of CRM consciousness of the accredited hotels in Angeles City and compare it with its clients. The level of CRM consciousness between the DOT accredited hotels and hotels clients are the same as evident in the ANOVA analysis performed. The weighted means of customer interaction,

customer upgrading, customer winback, customer orientation, CRM technology, and customer satisfaction manifested same degree of CRM consciousness between the hotel establishments and hotel clients. This output reveals that the level of CRM conscious among DOT accredited hotels in Angeles City is high which reflects high degree of CRM consciousness also on the part of hotel clients. The importance of CRM in the hotel industry is vital for the success of each establishment.

The high degree of customer orientation on both the hotel establishments and hotel clients signifies the high degree of customer relationship being established by hotels. This result supports the claim of Yim, Anderson, and Swaminathan, (2004) and Armstrong and Kotler (2013) that once there organization-wide understanding and support for hotel clients, customer interaction activates sale force to build long-term relationships with them through more personalized hotel products and services. On one hand, the high level of customer upgrading reveals that hotel establishments in Angeles City provide systematic way of providing hotel services and products to their clientele. It also signifies that they have a formal procedure for cross-selling to valuable customers and/or high-value clients. Although there are different factors that hotel clients consider for them to be satisfied, appearance, cleanliness, and price are considered important (wisegeek.com, 2013).

In terms of customer winback, the high degree of customer loyalty is very much evident in the hotels in Angeles City. Fundamentally, maintaining positive relationships with hotel clients leads to customer satisfaction and loyalty in the long run. . Rigby, Reichheld and Schefter (2002) identified CRM has to do with providing customized products and services to augment customer loyalty by means of gathering customer data swiftly and identification of most valuable customers through time. Mckenzie (2001) argued that CRM aims at focusing attention on customers through a combination of strategy and information systems. Furthermore, the high level of customer

orientation poses an important consideration in hotel CRM. Firms must become knowledgeable in managing customers in order to uncover their needs thus creating satisfaction for them (Zablah, Bellenger, & Johnston, 2004).

It is also vital to note that CRM technology utilized in hotels is an imperative. The high degree of consciousness of hotel establishments and clients signifies that hotels in Angeles are leaning toward the utilization of CRM-enabled technology. Zebalah, Bellenger, and Johnston (2004) mentioned that CRM technology is an organization resource that serves as a factor in the CRM process and it is vital for profit-maximizing customer relationships. Additionally, the high degree of customer satisfaction being provided by hotels and being experienced by their clients signifies possibility of long-term profit for the hotel industry itself. The impact of CRM on customer satisfaction was evaluated by Mithas, Krishnan, and Fornell (2005). In their study, they observed the effect of CRM on customer knowledge and customer satisfaction. From their analysis, it showed that firms that utilize CRM applications are positively related with improved customer knowledge and improved customer satisfaction. In further pointed out that gains from customer knowledge are improved when firms share their information pertaining to customer with their partners in the supply chain.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

Since there is no significant difference between DOT accredited hotels and hotel clients in terms of CRM consciousness, it is recommended that each hotel establishment should continue its present CRM practices. To further increase the satisfaction of hotel clients, it is an imperative to continually update their establishment with the current trends in CRM for them to build lasting relationships with their customer, thus can create profitability through loyalty in the long run. Continuous

retooling for hotel employees is also recommended. Since the hotel industry in general is a people-oriented industry, it is vital to continuously provide hotel employees current skills and trainings to better serve hotel clients. Hotels should also look for opportunities aside of their present services and hotel offerings to increase customer loyalty. Lastly, it is important for hotel establishments to invest on CRM technologies because of its positive lasting impact on customer satisfaction.

Further research can be done in the future to assess other variables that can affect the hotel industry aside from the identified factors in the study.

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