



## MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IMPLEMENTED BY THE HOTEL AS AN EFFORT TO INCREASE VISITOR INTEREST DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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### Abstract

In achieving success, they have prepared several marketing communication strategies before marketing their community products, increasingly attracting public attention. The purpose of this research is how marketing communication strategies are carried out to increase visitor interest during the Covid-19 pandemic period. The research method used in this study uses qualitative research with a descriptive approach and data collection techniques through interviews and documentation. The data analysis technique of this research was carried out after obtaining data through interviews and in-depth documentation. Then, this data is selected with important and irrelevant data from the collected data, analyzed in relation to each other to get provisional allegations and draw conclusions.

This study indicates that marketing communications during the Covid-19 pandemic have referred to the 4Ps, namely *Product*, *Price*, *Place*, and *Promotion*. During the Covid-19 pandemic, hotels have implemented health protocols following government recommendations, intensively conducting *sales calls* and *telemarketing*, holding promotions every month, and collaborating with other parties to promote to companies, government agencies, and travel agents both *offline travel agents* to increase visitor interest.

**Keywords:** Marketing Communication, Visitor Interest, Covid-19

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### INTRODUCTION

The era of globalization is very impactful in today's business world. Globalization creates intense competition in the business world. With this globalization, the business world must inevitably be encouraged to achieve a good, effective and efficient corporate organization. Effectiveness and efficiency in a company are needed to have competitiveness and advantages over its competitors so that the company can survive in a world of very tight competition.

A company needs to be different from other businesses and hard to copy, which only comes from creative, productive employees and have a lot of loyalty. Employees who meet these standards can only be yours if you use ideas and marketing strategies to get more visitors during the covid-19 pandemic.

Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) worldwide is increasingly widespread, and the number of cases exposed to Covid-19 is increasing day by day. The impact of the Covid-19 crisis has changed the way people live and must face new challenges in carrying out their daily lives, one of which is for business people. Business people have experienced difficult challenges maintaining their business during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis and must try to adapt to these situations and conditions.

Until now, the Covid-19 pandemic cannot be said to have ended, but life must continue and even hit and hit business people, one of which is in hospitality services, which can be said

to be the earliest affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and the slowest for recovery. The government has implemented many policies, including the temporary closure of hotel operations to reduce social interaction to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

With the enactment of the *New Normal* era, which is an activity that can be carried out again outside the home while still complying with health protocols, now business people are required to be able to adapt to new habits or behaviors in carrying out daily activities by referring to the health protocols that have been recommended or set. By the government, like diligent washing hands with soap or antiseptic liquids such as *hand sanitizers*, wearing masks when leaving the house, maintaining distance, and avoiding crowds to stay safe and protect yourself from the spread of Covid-19. The term *New Normal* era can be said to provide opportunities for business people by reopening companies that were temporarily closed to be able to get back up to stay afloat.

Given this pandemic, policies that can carry out are implementing health protocols such as using masks, washing hands before entering the hotel, providing *hand sanitizers* at several points in the hotel environment, checking body temperature through the entrance, maintaining distance, and cleaning and spraying disinfectant regularly to create conditions that prioritize health to increase guest confidence when visiting and provide safe and comfortable services for visitors.

The Covid-19 pandemic greatly affects the number of hotel guests staying, depending on the hotel's trust and sense of security. However, the government's policy of Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) resulted in the temporary closure of hotel operations under government regulations.

After the government established the enactment of the *New Normal* era, such as making policies with the reopening of hotel operations which could provide opportunities for business people to be able to rise to survive by following health protocols such as using masks, washing hands before entering the hotel, giving hand sanitizers, checking body temperature through the entrance, keeping a distance and so on, the hotel has re-opened operations according to information obtained through social media accounts. The hotel business is now growing rapidly and has to compete with other hotels. Therefore, hotels must develop effective and efficient marketing communication strategies to attract hotel guests. Of course, every hotel is required to provide good services and facilities to guests to obtain guest satisfaction and loyalty and have the trust and sense of security to be able to use these services despite the conditions during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Marketing communication is very important for companies, namely as a tool to achieve company goals in disseminating information, influencing and persuading companies to achieve company success. Companies need the right strategy to maintain consumers to remain loyal to the company. By communicating in the business world, companies try to understand customers to meet customer needs and provide the best service to customers.

The hotel's marketing communication has a difference before the Covid-19 pandemic and during the Covid-19 pandemic. For now, the hotel is maximizing its products and facilities by providing room or *room* and *breakfast* services. *Events, meeting rooms, and convention halls* are also still available. However, there are still limited time and number of visitors under the health protocols set by the government regarding *social distancing*. Currently, the hotel is intensively conducting *sales calls* and *telemarketing*. Regular visits to companies, government agencies and so on are still being carried out but must refer to health protocols and follow established procedures.

Media is a container or tool to convey information. Information to be shared to introduce hotels, products and existing facilities by using media intermediaries to assist the success of marketing communications such as electronic mass media.

This hotel is one in Indonesia that has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the hotel is still operating with various policies and effective marketing communication strategies needed to sell their products to increase visitor interest during the Covid-19 pandemic. Marketing communication is considered effective if it impacts cognitive, affective and conative effects.

The formulation of the problem in this study is how is the hotel's marketing communication strategy in increasing the interest of hotel visitors during the Covid-19 pandemic? While the purpose of this study was to find out how the hotel's marketing communication strategy was to increase visitor interest during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Marketing Communication**

Marketing communication plays a very important role for marketers. Without communication, consumers and society will not know the existence of the product on the market. Marketing communication is a marketing activity that aims to disseminate information, influence, convince and remind the target market or company and products that they are willing to accept, buy and be loyal to the products offered. According to Burnett and Moriarty (Prisgunanto, 2014), marketing communication is part of the *marketing mix*. Its function is to convey various other marketing elements, such as; product and pricing, promotion, and

distribution, to increase purchases. Suryanto (2015). Marketing communication is a process of processing, producing and delivering messages through one or more channels to target audience groups that are two-way in nature, intending to support the effectiveness and efficiency of product marketing.

According to Suryanto (2015), the purpose and function of marketing communication can be seen in three ways, namely as follows:

1. Dissemination of information from a product (information exchange), such as information on prices, distribution, and others;
2. Influencing target buyers or attracting competing customers to switch brands (persuasive communication);
3. Remind *the audience* to make repeat purchases or communicate by reminding.

### **Marketing Communication Concept**

The concept is the meaning of a being that can understand subjectively or according to the context.

They are derived from the Latin "*concept*," which means something can understand. Aristotle stated that this concept is the main ingredient in the production of scientific knowledge. Concepts are also defined as mental images expressed in words or symbols. According to Yulianti (Panuju, 2019), marketing communication can broadly explain: 1) All forms of communication used by organizations to inform about a product and influence the buying behavior of consumers and potential customers. 2) Communication techniques designed to inform consumers and customers about the benefits and value of goods or services offered. 3) The communication process is designed from the pre-sale stage, through the use stage, and to the end of use. 4) Communication programs designed for specific segments, market gaps, and even individual segments. Because every consumer and customer has a different character. 5) Communication activities are not only aimed at "How marketers can reach consumers or customers," but also "How marketers can find ways that will allow consumers and potential customers to reach the company's products easily."

### **Marketing Communication Strategy**

According to Saiman (2014), strategies are steps that companies or entrepreneurs must follow to achieve a goal. Sometimes the actions taken are difficult, but there are also relatively easy steps. Marketing strategy is a very important factor in the occurrence of a transaction, considering that no matter how good the market segmentation or *market positioning* is, it will run well and smoothly without the right marketing strategy. Marketing strategy is the steps an

individual or group of people take to achieve a goal. The measure of success in implementing a marketing strategy is customer satisfaction. The more customers receive the goods or services offered, the more signs they are satisfied with the choice of the strategy implemented.

Marketing strategy is very important for companies where marketing strategy is one way to achieve company goals. Marketing strategies are not just for big companies. Small businesses also need a marketing strategy to develop their business because often, in a critical situation, small businesses can provide growth to people's income. According to Prisgunanto (2014:222), the marketing communication strategy describes the message distributed to certain target customers (recipients) through optimal marketing communications.

### **Marketing Communication Mix**

The *marketing mix* is defined as a strategy carried out by the company, which can include determining the overall plan and understanding and providing satisfactory product services (presentation) in certain market segments where that market segment has been used as a target market for products that have been launched to attract consumers. Make a purchase (Hermawan, 2012).

According to McCarty (Ningsih & Maika, 2020), marketing mix activities (Marketing Mix) consist of 4 categories, namely:

a. Product.

Product is the most important thing in a marketing strategy that must be considered by a company to be offered to the market in the form of goods or services by providing products that meet the needs, best quality and innovate to attract consumer interest.

b. Price.

Price is the value of an item that can measure in a currency such as price lists, promotions, payment schedules and so on. Price is a determining factor and plays an important role in the process of buying and selling agreements were to decide on a purchase price is one of the things that must consider.

c. Place.

The distribution process is a company activity related to providing goods or services so that customers can use them and consume the product or service, including location, transportation supply, and market coverage. The supporting factor for purchasing goods or services is a strategic and easy-to-reach place.

d. Promotion.

Promotion is a determining factor for the success of a marketing program that aims to convey or communicate to convince potential customers or consumers regarding the goods or services offered.

### **Hotel Marketing**

Hotel as stated by Kotler & Keller (Chandra & Tjiptono, 2012), is one form of product, service which can be interpreted as "any action or deed that any party can offer to another party which is intangible (*intangible*) and does not result in the ownership of anything."

The hotel provides services and facilities for tourism activities. Hotels offer temporary accommodation and facilities for tourists, which can positively impact tourists. This service may be a driving factor for tourists and greatly influence the development of tourism and the regional economy.

The hospitality industry marketing concept adopts an outside-in perspective. The marketing starts from a well-defined market, seeking innovation, integrating all activities that affect customers, and generating profits through customer concentration. A very satisfied customer can become a loyal customer. The main basis of customer satisfaction is the party that can provide the best service to hotel customers. Therefore, the effectiveness of hotel marketing is highly dependent on hotel employees. Hotels offer two important things to satisfy customers: providing satisfactory service for hotel guests and products such as hotel rooms, transportation, and others. In hotel marketing, there are many combinations to offer services to guests, including the development of special events, events, and programs to increase company sales and tourist consumption (Budi, 2013).

### **Consumer Interest**

According to Keller (Sulistiyari, 2012), consumer interest is an action in how likely consumers are to buy a brand or how potential consumers are to switch from one brand to another. Other. If the benefits are greater than the sacrifices made to get it, the desire to buy it will be higher. Purchase *intention (willingness to accept)* is part of the behavioral component in the attitude of consuming. Consumer buying interest is when consumers choose among several who are incorporated in several choices, and finally buy them in alternative ways related to what they like or make choices based on the consumer's process of purchasing goods or services with various considerations (Suyono et al., 2012).

### **Factors Affecting Consumer Interest**

According to Anam (2017), the factors that influence interest are divided into two factors, namely internal and external, which can be described as follows:

- a. Internal factors, namely the factors contained within the individual, come from within a person, including personal and psychological factors. 1) Personal Factors, 2) Psychological Factor
- b. External Factors. Factors originating from or related to external affairs, including 1) Cultural, 2) Social, 3) Service, 4) Promotion, 5) Location, 6) Price.

## **METHOD**

### **Types of research**

This study uses a descriptive type of research with a qualitative approach. The descriptive analysis involves collecting data to test hypotheses or answer questions about the state of the research subject. The most common type of descriptive research evaluates attitudes or opinions about individuals, organizations, circumstances, or procedures (Kuncoro, 2018). Afrizal (2014) explains that the qualitative research method is a scientific research method applied to the social sciences. This method collects and analyzes data in the form of words (oral or written) and human behavior so that researchers do not attempt to calculate or quantify the qualitative data that has been obtained so that numbers do not analyze the numbers. The research will be at one of Indonesia's hotels in August 2021.

### **Data collection technique**

According to (Moleong, 2005), data collection techniques are a strategy to obtain the data needed to answer questions. The data collection technique aims to get data under the research so that the authors receive complete data both orally and in writing. To obtain data and information that can be used as material for this research, researchers collect data by:

#### **1. Interview**

An interview is an interview without alternative answer choices and is conducted to find out the information provided by the informant. Since the interviewer has to explore the data from the informant, in-depth interviews should perform several times between the interviewer and the informant. Several interviews were conducted to test or confirm information (Afrizal, 2014). In this case, the researcher conducted direct interviews with the hotel's marketing division so that the researchers got the real data. In addition, in-depth interviews were also conducted with several hotel visitors.

#### **2. Documentation**

According to (Sugiyono, 2015), Documentation made by the author is all forms of written or unwritten documentation that can use to complete other data. This method aims to obtain

clear and specific data regarding the hotel's marketing communication strategy in increasing the interest of hotel visitors during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Data Analysis Technique**

Data analysis in qualitative research is an activity that is carried out continuously throughout the study, starting from data collection to the stage of writing reports (Afrizal, 2014). According to Miles and Huberman in (Afrizal, 2014), data analysis in qualitative research is divided into three stages: reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. The three steps will be detailed as follows:

1. Data reduction is defined as the activity of selecting important and irrelevant data from the data that has been collected.
2. Presentation of data is the presentation of structured information. An advanced stage of analysis in which researchers present research results in the form of categories or groupings. Matrices and graphs are very useful for giving research results which are research results to make them more effective.
3. Drawing conclusions or verification is an advanced stage where the researcher concludes data findings. This study is an interpretation of the findings of the interview or document. After the conclusion is drawn, the researcher then re-checks the correctness of the performance by checking repeat the data reduction and presentation process to ensure that no errors have been made.

### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

1. Responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, especially related to the health protocol rules set by the government

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed many things and impacted people's lives, including business people, one of which is in the field of hospitality services. Health protocols are actions or attitudes that need to be followed by hotels or visitors to create security and mutual comfort during the Covid-19 pandemic. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the decrease in visitors encouraged hotels to improve services following standardized health protocols. This protocol is done so that guests or visitors feel comfortable and without hesitation staying at the hotel even though the pandemic situation is still hitting. Through interviews conducted with visitors, there are several reasons why visitors choose to stay at hotels while the Covid-19 pandemic is still striking.

2. The protocol steps take to maintain existence during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Covid-19 pandemic has made many businesses unable to survive due to losing their market. Regarding the health protocol policies and rules that the government has set, the hotel must make a policy and take steps to maintain its existence during the Covid-19 pandemic by arranging several strategies to maintain business continuity during the Covid-19 pandemic. The goal is to retain visitors so that the reality of products and services remains known to the public.

3. The marketing division carried out socialization related to hotels during the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the marketing division carried out regular socialization intending to increase public knowledge, maintain the hotel's good name, and establish cooperation with other parties.

4. The actions taken to increase visitor interest during the Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on the hotel business, where hotel occupancy has decreased due to the government's policies to reduce the number of Covid-19 transmissions. One strategy that can do at this time is by providing promotional prices to influence and increase visitor interest during the Covid-19 pandemic so that the hotel can sell the products or services.

5. The difference between marketing communication before the Covid-19 pandemic and during the Covid-19 pandemic

In the business world, it is necessary to have marketing communication. Good marketing communication will lead to the realization of the goal, namely good relations with visitors so that trust or loyalty will be formed in the products or services offered. Of course, the Covid-19 pandemic greatly affected the changes in marketing communications changes carried out.

6. How to make loyal hotel guests come back even though the Covid-19 pandemic situation is still hitting

The factor that influences visitor interest is trust. Creating hotel guest satisfaction can be done by providing good service. If hotel guests are satisfied with the services offered, hotel guests will be loyal to come back and recommend to others to visit the hotel. Therefore, the quality of service affects the positive experience and guest satisfaction so that guests are loyal to come back even though the Covid-19 pandemic situation is still hitting. Based on the interview results, the hotel has provided good service to hotel guests or visitors so that it will increase loyalty and guests come back to stay and visit the hotel.

7. Products and services offered to facility users and hotel guests during the Covid-19 pandemic

The current Covid-19 pandemic has forced hotels to implement and develop various policies to make changes. Seeing this condition, guests will see a big difference when visiting the hotel. Social distancing measures, reducing the capacity of public spaces, products and facilities and prices are some of the things that have changed.

This hotel has products that are good enough to meet the needs of guests, ranging from complete facilities and a large number of rooms. To increase the trust of potential guests, the hotel has currently implemented standardization rules regarding health protocols following government recommendations such as wearing masks, checking body temperature through entrances, and providing *hand sanitizers*. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, all hotel products and facilities offer guests such as restaurants, swimming pools, *massage & spas*, etc. It's different during the Covid-19 pandemic. Only a few products are currently being offered.

8. Setting policies or price adjustments related to services offered during the Covid-19 pandemic

Price is the value or nominal that someone must issue to get the desired product or service, as well as an element that plays an important role for a company. In setting policies or price adjustments related to the services offered, a careful analysis of the products to be marketed is needed as an advantage of the products produced by a company. Products with the same quality but relatively low prices will provide separate considerations for consumers to choose the service they want to use. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the decline in people's economic values so that people's purchasing power has greatly decreased, even many business people have set policies or price adjustments by lowering prices, such as giving *discounts* to influence consumers' purchasing power. The hotel has set a price policy by current conditions by looking at the declining market share and the community's economy and providing standard prices that are not too expensive but still offer good service to create satisfaction for guests.

9. Collaborating with other parties to promote during the Covid-19 pandemic

Currently, the competition in the hospitality business is getting tougher. It must compete with other hotels so that the hotel must implement various strategies to promote its products and services. An interesting approach to increase visitor interest is to collaborate with other parties. This cooperation can expand the market and increase hotel visitors in the long term.

10. Promotional media conveys information.

Promotion is an important policy carried out by a company in marketing products and services that function as a tool to influence consumers or introduce products and services offered. For this reason, the company tries to promote its products and services either directly or through media intermediaries. Promotions are also carried out to increase visitor interest during the Covid-19 pandemic. Currently, social media is not only used as a place of entertainment, but through social media, hotels can also use it as a tool or means to promote their products and services so that consumers can easily it is easy to get information related to hotels only through *smartphones* which users can access at any time. The hotel does promotions through social media, namely Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp.

Promotional media is used through Facebook. Facebook is also one of the most popular social media used by the public, from children, students, teenagers, and parents. Therefore, when carrying out promotional activities, many will see the information that has been submitted so that it will have an impact on increasing the number of guests or visitors. In addition, it also conducts promotions via *e-mail* and websites where all consumers can view and obtain information related to the products offered easily.

## **Discussion**

During this Covid-19 pandemic, the hotel continues to maintain its business by implementing health protocols that refer to government regulations such as using masks, washing hands before entering the hotel, providing *hand sanitizers* at several points in the hotel environment.

I check body temperature through the entrance and maintain a distance in its operations to offer visitors comfort, safety, and confidence. During the Covid -19 pandemic, the hotel maximized its products and facilities by providing room service and breakfast. *Events, meeting rooms, and convention halls* are still available, but there is still limited time, and some visitors follow health protocols regarding *social distancing*. Meanwhile, other services such as swimming pools restaurants are not operating because some of these facilities have the potential for Covid-19 transmission and refer to government regulations regarding time limits and *social distancing* to prevent Covid-19 transmission. The hotel certainly minimizes facilities that provide less income and which have the potential to increase crowds.

The process is carried out in setting policies or price adjustments related to services offered during the Covid-19 pandemic by providing promotional prices in adjusting to conditions amid a pandemic that impacts the decline in the economic value of the community. Before entering the Covid-19 pandemic, they were selling at normal prices.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the hotel did promotions through *sales calls* and *telemarketing*. *Sales Call* is done by coming directly to offices and companies to promote. *Telemarketing* itself is by contacting guests in *the database* who have previously stayed at hotels or PIC (*Person In Charge*) to maintain *relationships* while promoting.

Before entering the Covid-19 pandemic, the hotel was aggressively promoted through printed media in brochures by distributing brochures at tourism locations, companies, government agencies, universities and others by designing aesthetic designs to attract potential visitors. However, during the Covid-19 pandemic, promotional strategies through printed media in the form of brochures are no longer used to avoid transmission of Covid-19.

Media is a container or tool to convey information. The information to be transferred includes promotions by introducing hotels, products and existing facilities. The media used to help the success of marketing communication strategies such as social media are Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp.

In the current era of rapidly developing technology, social media is now one of the most appropriate ways to market a hotel. It can even be directly received with the maximum and right on target by the target guests to be addressed. The hotel can also reach more potential guests through social media to find out what products are offered and the promotions provided. Therefore, utilizing social media is a great opportunity to open up opportunities to develop and attract more potential guests, such as distributing messages via the WhatsApp application to all guests who have stayed, posting pictures in the form of brochures with aesthetic designs in the form of displaying information about promotions.

In addition, the hotel also uses online media to promote, such as websites that can access through the website. With this website, prospective guests will get various kinds of complete information such as hotel facilities, *room* categories, locations, photos, *contact persons*, etc. The hotel also designs an attractive website design display to provide additional convenience for website readers and increase the trust of potential customers. Collaborating and building good relationships is also a marketing communication strategy that is carried out to increase the number of visitors.

In line with the theory said by Prisgunanto (2014) regarding strategic steps in marketing communication, namely: *Push Strategy*, namely direct promotion carried out by the company. Where the hotel collaborates with the *government*, *corporate* dams, *travel agents* both *offline* and *online* to increase occupancy, *pull Strategy* (Attractive Strategy) uses mass media to attract consumer interest in the products offered. The hotel provides information about hotel

promotions through social media, Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp. In addition, through online media such as *websites* and *e-mail*. The hotel applies these two strategies aimed at hotel visitors to attract visitors' interest by utilizing these media.

From the results of research on marketing communication strategies in increasing the interest of hotel visitors during the Covid-19 pandemic, researchers found that the hotel in conducting marketing communications during the Covid-19 pandemic had referred to the 4Ps, namely Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. This work is in line with what was conveyed by McCarty (Ningsih & Maika, 2020) regarding marketing mix activities. The effectiveness of marketing communication can know through the effects of cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitude), and conative (behavior). This description is in line with the theory put forward by Priansa (2017) that visitors already know visitor knowledge about hotels because the information provided is quite complete regarding products, facilities, and prices understood. The information obtained is not only directly but also through social media.

Based on the affective effect, most hotel visitors already like the services provided. Hotel visitors also feel that implementing marketing communication activities is enough to attract visitors' interest and attention. Therefore, hotel visitors have shown a sense of satisfaction, comfort and liking. Meanwhile, based on the conative effect, hotel visitors are very satisfied and like the services provided and the prices offered are also very attractive to visitors. For this reason, hotel visitors will inform family, relatives and friends to visit or stay. The effectiveness of marketing communication on cognitive, affective and conative effects is quite effective because hotel guests have shown knowledge, satisfaction, and real action. From the discussion above, it can be formulated that the marketing communication strategy during the Covid-19 pandemic has been effective and running well.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research and discussion that have been described in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that:

1. The hotel has carried out marketing communications well and effectively during the Covid-19 pandemic, which refers to the 4Ps, namely *Product, Price, Place* and *Promotion*, as evidenced by the number of guests, which has increased gradually. Gradually during the *New Normal*. The service provided is also quite good according to the 5S (*smile, greeting, greeting, secure and polite*).

2. The hotel is still cooperating with other parties such as *government, corporate, airport magazines, travel agents, both offline travel agents and online travel agents* to increase the number of guests or visitor interest in the future during the Covid-19 pandemic.
3. The hotel has also implemented and followed health protocols that refer to government regulations to prevent the spread of Covid-19 by wearing masks, washing hands before entering the hotel, checking body temperature through the entrance, providing *hand sanitizers*, and maintaining distance.

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