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# The Relationship Between Digital Marketing Strategies and Firm Performance In Selected Hospitals In Beijing, China

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#### **Abstract**

Healthcare marketing is a broad field that includes both general and specific knowledge of marketing and business activities related to goods and services in the areas of medicine, therapy, and patient/citizen/buyer health improvement, with profits going to the society and organizations that provide the good or service. This study is undertaken to understand the healthcare sector and examine whether digital marketing is an appropriate marketing practice because the healthcare industry is seen to be lagging other industries in the field of digital marketing. This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design, which enabled the one-time collection of data from 575 employees of four private hospitals in Beijing, namely Beijing Yandu Hospital, Beijing Chaoyang Third Hospital, Beijing United Family Hospital and Beijing New Century International Hospital for Children for analysis and findings generation. The population comprised employees of four private hospitals in Beijing. Using a confidence level of 80 percent and an error margin of 20 percent. Krejcie and Morgan formula was applied to determine the sample size for this study as follows: N=460, S=210. The findings reveal that there is a positive correlation between hospital performance and 2 of the independent variables (social media marketing and email marketing). Email marketing has the highest positive connection (0.202\*\*) with hospital performance. In a similar vein, the findings demonstrate a positive correlation between hospital performance and social media marketing (0.145\*). Therefore, H1 and H3 hypotheses proposed were accepted. As for multiple linear regression analysis, the R square is 0.514, showing that this model explained 51.4% of the variations in hospital performance. Digital strategies that affect the hospital performance include social media marketing, online advertising, and email marketing. Social media marketing and email marketing showed significant positive relationship with hospital performance, with p values of 0.014 and 0.015 respectively. P value less than 0.005 indicates

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there is a significant relationship between the two variables. The results state that the beta coefficients for two independent variables (social media marketing and email marketing) had a positive and significant effect on hospital performance. The results revealed that email marketing has the highest beta value (0.182) followed by social media marketing (0.108). However, for online advertising, p=0.822 and beta coefficients is -0.015. This indicates that online advertising is not significantly positive related to hospital performance.

**Keywords:** Digital Marketing Strategies, Social Media Marketing, Online Advertising, Email Marketing, Firm Performance of Healthcare Industries

#### Introduction

Healthcare marketing is a broad field that includes both general and specific knowledge of marketing and business activities related to goods and services in the areas of medicine, therapy, and patient/citizen/buyer health improvement, with profits going to the society and organizations that provide the good or service. People's health is a result of these products. They are governed by strict and laws on their approach to the market, starting with production restrictions, quality control, distribution, a premarketing phase, registration process, marketing license, and tracking the medication once it has been launched.

We live in a digital age, which has gotten even more so since the COVID-19 epidemic, when people spend more time online looking for information and rely more on smart devices. While Google asserts that up to 77% of patients use the Internet before deciding, other studies indicate that 95% of consumers now compare and check product or service reviews before making a purchase (McCabe, 2020). As a result, an increasing number of health organizations understand the need to have an online presence and utilize digital platforms to draw in new customers. Benefits include the capacity for health companies to quickly sell a good or service to a specific demographic as well as the freedom to select the population to target for preventative campaigns and services. In the digital world, one may easily measure and improve results as well as get dependable information on a variety of activities.

# **Problem Statement**

The emergence of COVID-19 is putting a lot of pressure on the healthcare sector (Arni and Laddha, 2017). The worldwide economy, industry, and organizations have all suffered greatly because of the COVID-19 epidemic, which has also had an impact on spending and marketing plans. Digital marketing is crucial since traditional marketing techniques no longer operate because of total lockdown in many areas. As a result of the large number of quarantine patients staying at home and worries about contracting COVID-19, individuals decide not to visit clinics or hospitals, which will reduce the volume of prescriptions written and the associated revenue in 2020. As such, utilization of marketing techniques and spending on these plans has expanded as digital has over the years (Khan and Nawaz, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has sped up the growth rate of digital marketing in the healthcare sector and is anticipated to boost hospital profits by increasing direct patient visits and patient telemedicine.

Patients are increasingly turning to the internet or other digital technologies to find the relevant information, followed by a more practical method to choose and purchase those goods or services because they are convinced that they are consumers of health services and products. Digital media and new technology platforms present opportunities for organizations like hospitals to expand into new markets, offer new services, apply for new online communication techniques, and compete on a more equal footing with larger

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businesses, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic conditions. In accordance with Arni and Laddha (2017), Al-Weshah et al. (2021) discovered that most patients looked online to learn about different treatment choices or, more generally, to learn about health issues or healthcare providers. Simply put, digital marketing is the process of achieving marketing objectives using technology and digital media.

#### **Research Questions**

There are three research questions formulated by researchers as follow:

- 1. Does social media marketing have significant relationship on firm performance in selected hospitals in Beijing, China?
- 2. Does online advertising have significant relationship on firm performance in selected hospitals in Beijing, China?
- 3. Does email marketing have significant relationship on firm performance in selected hospitals in Beijing, China?

## Research Objectives

The research objectives below are developed in response to the study:

- 1. To identify the relationship of social media marketing on firm performance in selected hospitals in Beijing, China.
- 2. To analyse the relationship of online advertising on firm performance in selected hospitals in Beijing, China.
- 3. To assess the relationship of email marketing on firm performance in selected hospitals in Beijing, China.

#### **Literature Review**

## Covid-19 Impact on the Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Industry

The COVID-19 pandemic is currently a global economic crisis that affects almost everyone, including healthcare. The patient appointments were postponed lessening the risk to patients and medical staff because of the pandemic, which had a significant impact on the provision of outpatient care. Physicians have tended to prefer in-person appointments whenever it has been practical to do so. For those who suffer from a chronic condition that needs ongoing care, supervision, and monitoring, this is a major issue. Treatment cannot be provided to medical workers or facilities. To avoid exposure to clinics and hospitals, many patients are advised to stay at home. Because of these factors, the need for online alternatives increased with time and trend, which were made clear by the number of medical and pharmaceutical enterprises entering the internet space. These businesses are vying for this position in the industry by mastering the digital marketing approach.

Medical businesses in China must put a lot of effort into their marketing strategies to attract and keep customers. As was mentioned, a nationwide lockdown prevents the implementation of traditional marketing, thus digital marketing is given more weight. The current study focuses on all significant facets of digital marketing in the healthcare industries that have been or might be used to increase current marketing effectiveness. A few significant strategic stances have emerged as a result of the study of the literature that is currently available and may assist businesses flourish over the internet at this moment. Through primary research, this study aims to connect the following theoretical conclusions to actual customer conduct.

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## **Digital Marketing Strategies**

The marketing of goods and services via the internet is known as digital marketing or online marketing (Emeh, Ahaiwe & Okoro, 2019). It involves carrying out marketing efforts and strategies via online and digital platforms. Electronic marketing includes operations carried out via wireless communication channels such as wireless local area networks (WLANs), wireless sensor networks, terrestrial microwave networks, cell phones, and satellite communication networks, and is not just limited to marketing activities carried out online (Gao et al., 2021). It makes use of a variety of technologies to link companies with their customers. Roumieh et al. (2018) contended that due to the additional channels and marketing tools made available by the internet, digital marketing encompasses a larger variety of marketing elements than traditional marketing. As a result, electronic marketing allows businesses to reach millions of individuals worldwide in a matter of minutes with their goods, services, and promotions. It is a two-way channel of communication that enables businesses to solicit feedback from clients in addition to disseminating information to them (Habibi et al., 2015). In a similar vein, Qashou and Saleh (2018) found that electronic marketing is adaptable and can be readily changed to meet the current state of the market at any given time. According to Papadopoulos, Baltas, and Balta (2020), digital marketing strategies are online, wireless, or internet-based technologies or channels that businesses may use to produce and distribute promotional content to customers and engage with them more successfully. As the internet and digital technology advance, so do these techniques, which are many, flexible, and ever evolving. They typically consist of banner advertising, payper-click advertising, sticky advertising, pop-up advertising, affiliate marketing, social media marketing, mobile marketing, viral marketing, content marketing, e-distribution, and email marketing, among other things.

## **Hospital Performance**

One of the most perplexing ideas in organizational theory is probably the concept of performance. The Chinese government has drastically cut fiscal assistance for public hospitals since the 1980s. Private hospital construction has been promoted in the meantime. As a result of this change, public hospitals are now essentially forced to compete with one another and the private sector. According to estimates, fewer than 15% of public hospitals' revenue comes from the government budget. A public hospital's capacity to draw patients and collect payments from those patients and their insurance funds will determine whether it survives or not. Throughout fact, throughout the 1990s, a lot of public hospitals were privatized. Private hospitals' market share and competitive standing, however, have rarely been researched. Most of the research on private hospitals is based on the simple premise that they prioritize shareholder returns before patients. It is generally agreed that hospital operations must strike a balance between such interests due to the complexity of healthcare services, which can involve competing interests from several stakeholders. Four methods for analyzing hospital performance were outlined by Chen et al. (2020): the rational/goal model, the natural system model, the open system model, and the internal/decision process model. Explicit goals are a major focus of the rational approach. The open system model looks at an organization's external health (relationships with external stakeholders and success in acquiring resources), whereas the natural system model focuses on an organization's internal health (such as morale, climate, cohesion, conflict, human development, and survival). The internal process model evaluates how well operations management is working. The four approaches have been attempted to be integrated. The balanced scorecard measurements Vol. 13, No. 11, 2023, E-ISSN: 2222-6990 © 2023

created by Norton and Kaplan, which combine all these factors into one set of indicators, are likely the most utilized in the health sector. Unfortunately, for the purposes of this study, such a complete collection of measurements is neither available nor preferred. Employees in hospitals are less likely to have competing interests with their employers (hospitals) on issues outside of their control, like legal compliance requirements (Chen et al., 2020). They both have high expectations for providing high-quality treatment. By including these data, possible disagreements between doctors and hospitals would be hidden rather than resolved. On the other hand, operational indicators are quite likely to reveal any possible disputes between hospitals and doctors. In China, there is intense pressure on private hospitals to reduce expenses to gain a competitive advantage.

# Methodology

## **Population**

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design, which enabled the one-time collection of data from 575 employees of four private hospitals in Beijing, namely Beijing Yandu Hospital, Beijing Chaoyang Third Hospital, Beijing United Family Hospital and Beijing New Century International Hospital for Children for analysis and findings generation. The population comprised employees of four private hospitals in Beijing. Using a confidence level of 80 percent and an error margin of 20 percent. Krejcie and Morgan formula was applied to determine the sample size for this study as follows: N=460, S=210. An approach that is frequently used in research is the estimation of sample size utilizing the Krejcie and Morgan formula. Sample size is calculated using the formula below.

$$n = \frac{\chi^2 N p (1-p)}{e^2 (N-1) + \chi^2 p (1-p)}$$

n = sample size

N = population size

e = acceptable sampling error

 $X^2$  = the table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841).

P = the population proportion (assumed to be .50 since this would provide the maximum sample size).

e = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (.05).

#### Sampling Size

The total number of employees from management levels who experience using emarketing in four private hospitals in Beijing, namely Beijing Yandu Hospital, Beijing Chaoyang Third Hospital, Beijing United Family Hospital and Beijing New Century International Hospital for Children consist of 575 employees. Using a confidence level of 80 percent and an error margin of 20 percent. Krejcie and Morgan formula was applied to determine the sample size for this study as follows: N=460, S=210. For this research, 210 survey questionnaires were distributed through online to the respondent via Google Form but researcher only chose qualified respondent to answer the questionnaire, who are the management levels employees that are involved in digital marketing. In this research, the researcher used simple random sampling for the hospitals in Beijing. The respondents of this study were employees

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from management levels who experience using e-marketing to improve their hospitals' performance.

#### **Data Collection Methods**

The independent variable in this study was digital marketing strategies. Three components of digital marketing strategies were included in this research study, which consists of social media marketing, online advertising, and email marketing. The variable for social media marketing survey questionnaires were adapted and adopted from Yilun Ding (2022), online advertising from Farooqi & Ahmad (2018) and email marketing from Vy Khuu & Phuong Do (2018). Whereas for dependent variable which measures the hospital performance, the questionnaires were adopted and adapted from Jael (2021). The scale consists of 8 items on financial perspective, financial perspective; learning and growth; internal business and customer perspective. Respondents were asked to give their response based on a five-point Likert-scale response with; (1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly agree. Whenever data analysis is required for this task, SPSS is employed. The organizational performance dimensions represent both the financial and non-financial components of the China healthcare system.

#### **Data Analysis Methods**

Online questionnaires were used in this research study. The results of the online survey were analyzed using statistical software such as Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). In this research study, descriptive analysis is used to provide insights about the demographic of respondents. This research study also employed Pearson correlation coefficient to determine the correlation between independent variables, digital marketing strategies (social media marketing, online advertising, and email marketing) and dependent variable (firm performance in selected hospitals in Beijing, China). Furthermore, multiple linear regression is used in this research study to test the relationship between digital marketing strategies and firm performance in selected hospitals in Beijing, China.

#### **Pilot Test**

A smaller sample than the intended sample size is utilized in a pilot survey as a testing method for the questionnaire. The questionnaire is distributed during this stage of conducting a survey to a portion of the entire sample population, or in less formal situations, only to a convenience sample. Prior to the real, extensive survey, a pilot survey can be conducted, which has several advantages for the researcher. The investigation of specific concerns that could potentially hurt the survey results is one of them. Among these concern is whether the questions are appropriate for the target audience., China

# Result and discussion Reliability Test

**Table 4.1:** 

Reliability Analysis

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	
Social Media Marketing	0.706	6	
Online Advertising	0.799	6	
Email Marketing	0.741	6	
Hospital Performance	0.753	8	

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Cronbach's Alpha value is used to determine whether the respondents' responses are trustworthy. The reliability of the respondents' responses is determined by the consistency of the scores and the Cronbach's Alpha value, which must be more than 0.70. Otherwise, if the Cronbach's Alpha value is less than 0.70, the respondents' responses are unreliable. The findings demonstrate that the reported alpha values for all variables that were measured ranged from 0.706 to 0.799. Overall, the analysis indicated that all of the alpha values for all of the variables were higher than the threshold of 0.70.

## **Descriptive Analysis**

## **Table 4.2:**

Demographic Information of Respondents

#### Gender

				Valid	Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Percent	Percent
Valid	Female	127	60.5	60.5	60.5
	Male	83	39.5	39.5	100.0
	Total	210	100.0	100.0	

## Age Group

				Valid	Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Percent	Percent
Valid	21 to 30 years old	114	54.3	54.3	54.3
	31 to 40 years old	42	20.0	20.0	74.3
	41 to 50 years old	32	15.2	15.2	89.5
	Above 50 years old	21	10.0	10.0	99.5
	Below 20 years old	1	0.5	0.5	100.0
	Total	210	100.0	100.0	

## **Social Media Account**

				Valid	Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Percent	Percent
Valid	Yes	210	100.0	100.0	100.0

## Job Experience in Hospital

				Valid	Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Percent	Percent
Valid	1 to 5 years	57	27.1	27.1	27.1

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11 to 20 years	21	10.0	10.0	37.1
6 to 10 years	128	61.0	61.0	98.1
Above 20 years	4	1.9	1.9	100.0
Total	210	100.0	100.0	

#### **Educational Level**

				Valid	Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Percent	Percent
Valid	Bachelors' Degree	107	51.0	51.0	51.0
	Diploma/Certification	22	10.5	10.5	61.4
	Masters' Degree	44	21.0	21.0	82.4
	PHD or above	37	17.6	17.6	100.0
	Total	210	100.0	100.0	

#### Gender

The result showed that there are more female than male in this research study, with female accounting for 60.5% and male 39.5%. Health and economic growth are greatly benefited by gender parity in the health workforce, and gender statistics can be used to better reflect issues and track gender equity progress. This is consistent with the findings of a descriptive analysis by Yu et al. (2022), which revealed that women made up the majority of the health workforce in China, particularly among nurses, technicians, and administrators.

## **Age Group**

As for age group, the majority of the respondents are from the age group of 21 to 30 years old, accounting for 54.3%, followed by 31 to 40 years old (20%) and 41 to 50 years old (15.2%) respectively. There are more young people than ever in the world. Over 3.5 billion people under the age of 30 are anticipated to exist by the year 2020. With such a vast number of young people on the planet, a demographic dividend—an unheard-of window of opportunity for economic growth—emerges. The working-age population is larger than the non-working-age population, which is a feature of this demographic dividend.

#### **Social Media Account**

The result finding showed that all respondents have social media accounts. Health care professionals (HCPs) can use social media as a tool to exchange knowledge, discuss problems with health care policy and practice, encourage healthy habits, interact with the public, and instruct and communicate with patients, carers, students, and colleagues. This could signal a change in the strained Chinese doctor-patient relationship (Zhou, Zhang & Su, 2020).

## Job Experience in Hospital

61% of the employees reported they worked for 6 to 10 years in the hospitals. For Chinese healthcare professionals, there is a significant tendency to leave. The intention to

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leave was expressed by nearly half of the health professionals who lacked a clear career development aim. In China, healthcare personnel have a high prevalence of occupational illnesses. Managers should focus more on solving this issue (Zhang et al., 2022).

#### **Educational Level**

Most of the respondents have academic qualifications of bachelors' degree, accounting for 51% (107 respondents). This is followed by a master's degree 21% and PHD or above (17.6%). China has a three-level degree structure that awards bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees in the field of medicine. If an applicant has completed high school and has scored well on the National Admission Examination, medical universities will provide a 5-year undergraduate medical program leading to the BM. The master's degree program (professional degree or research degree) is open to holders of the BM who pass the National Postgraduate Entrance Examination and commit to 2-3 years of full-time study. A student who passes the National Doctor Entrance Examination can enroll in a medical university or medical institute after earning a master's degree to pursue a doctorate degree. The DM is a degree in research. It is granted upon the successful completion of three years of additional study, including a six-month curricular study and a 2.5-year medical research project.

#### **Pearson Correlation Analysis**

Table 4.3
Pearson Correlation Coefficient

**Correlations** 

		Total_SMM	Total_HP
Total_SMM	Pearson Correlation	1	.145*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.040
	N	210	210
Total_HP	Pearson Correlation	.145*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.040	
	N	210	210

<sup>\*.</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

#### **Correlations**

		Total_OA	Total_HP
Total_OA	Pearson Correlation	1	0.071
Sig. (2-tailed)			0.315
	N	210	210
Total_HP	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	0.071	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.315	
	N	210	210

## **Correlations**

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		Total_EM	Total_HP
Total_EM	Pearson Correlation	1	.202**
Sig. (2-tailed)			0.004
	N	210	210
Total_HP	Pearson Correlation	.202**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.004	
	N	210	210

<sup>\*\*.</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.3 reveals that there is a positive correlation between hospital performance and 2 of the independent variables (social media marketing and email marketing). Email marketing has the highest positive connection (0.202\*\*) with hospital performance. In a similar vein, the findings demonstrate a positive correlation between hospital performance and social media marketing (0.145\*). Therefore, H1 and H3 hypotheses proposed were accepted. The study concludes that two of the primary independent variables of digital marketing (social media marketing and email marketing) were significantly associated to hospital performance in selected hospitals in Beijing, China. Each variable's relationship to the others can be determined by analyzing their correlations. As collinearity is not a problem, a multiple regression analysis can be employed to evaluate the study's hypothesis.

However, online advertising showed p=0.315, indicating that there is no correlation between hospital performance and online advertising. Further regression analysis is required to justify the H2 hypothesis.

## **Multiple Regression Analysis**

Table 4.4
Digital Marketing Strategies and Firm Performance of Healthcare Industries
Model Summary

	•			Std.	Change Statistics				
				Error of	R				
M		R	Adjuste	the	Square				Sig. F
od		Squar	d R	Estimat	Chang	F			Chang
el	R	е	Square	е	е	Change	df1	df2	е
1	.227 <sup>a</sup>	0.514	0.669	1.95480	0.514	3.543	3	196	0.016

a. Predictors: (Constant), Total Total SMM, Total OA, Total EM

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Mod	lel	Sum of Squar es	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	40.61 4	3	13.538	3.543	.016 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	748.9 66	196	3.821		
	Total	789.5 80	199			

- a. Dependent Variable: Total HP
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Total\_SMM, Total\_OA, Total\_EM

#### Coefficientsa

Cocinciants						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standar dized Coeffici ents		
			Std.			I
		_			_	<b>.</b> .
Model		В	Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	26.78	3.539		7.568	0.000
		1				
	Total_SMM	0.167	0.112	0.108	1.484	0.014
	Total_OA	-	0.101	-0.015	-0.197	0.844
		0.020				
	Total_EM	0.213	0.087	0.182	2.456	0.015

- a. Dependent Variable: Total HP
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Total\_SMM, Total\_OA, Total\_EM

Note: \* p < .05

SMM Social Media Marketing

OA Online Advertising EM Email Marketing

**HP Hospital Performance** 

Table 4.4 indicates that linear regression predicts the value of a variable based on the value of another variable. The result presents that F value equal to 3.543. There is statistically significant as the regression model shows significant value with 0.016, therefore implying that digital marketing strategies have a significant effect on the hospital performance. The R square is 0.514, showing that this model explained 51.4% of the variations in hospital performance. Digital strategies that affect the hospital performance include social media marketing, online advertising, and email marketing. Social media marketing and email marketing showed significant positive relationship with hospital performance, with p values of 0.014 and 0.015 respectively. P value less than 0.005 indicates there is a significant relationship between the two variables. The results state that the beta coefficients for two independent variables (social media marketing and email marketing) had a positive and significant effect on hospital performance. The results revealed that email marketing has the highest beta value (0.182) followed by social media marketing (0.108). However, for online

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advertising, p=0.822 and beta coefficients is -0.015. This indicates that online advertising is not significantly positive related to hospital performance.

#### Conclusion

The goal of this study is to evaluate the effects of social media marketing, online advertising, and email marketing on hospital performance. In this study, three hypotheses are investigated out, but only hypotheses 1 and 3 are accepted (which is social media marketing and email marketing) are found to positively affect hospital performance. This finding demonstrates that not all digital marketing initiatives involving the use of digital marketing in hospitals are the primary driver of improved business performance because these organizations can still thrive using independent marketing tactics. Refer to online advertising in this instance. Additionally, some of them are still learning about the use of digital marketing and technological innovation in hospitals, especially small hospitals. They decided to stay with traditional marketing methods including word of mouth, direct selling, and television. The findings of this study show that the performance of hospitals in the healthcare sector is significantly and favorably impacted by digital marketing. The most widely acknowledged advantage is that since real-time, 24-hour contact is possible, patient communication is more intensive as well as effective and efficient.

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