The Marketing Strategies for Chanel to Cater to the Youth Aesthetic

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Abstract. With the development of China's economy and education, more and more young consumers are gradually becoming the mainstream of social consumption. By applying the Marketing mix theory, this paper explores the impact of four factors - price, product, place, and promotion - on Chanel cosmetics and skin care products in the context of a shift towards younger consumer attitudes. Through quantitative analysis of an online questionnaire survey of 142 Chinese luxury consumers, the 4Ps were found to have a positive and direct impact on young consumers’ purchasing behavior and intentions, with price being the main factor influencing young consumers. The relevant results reflect the consumption and aesthetic characteristics of the younger generation of Chinese luxury consumers, and it can be seen that Chanel can use the personalized product design, product sustainability, and male spokesperson as a starting point to further develop, design, and promote its products to attract more young consumers and expand its market share. At the same time, this paper has some limitations as the data does not cover the entire young population.

Keywords: Chinese market; young consumers; skincare products/cosmetics; Chanel.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

In 2021, the Chinese luxury market reaches $43.9 billion, the second-largest in the world after the U.S. While Chinese millennials significantly drive the dominant growth of luxury consumption [1]. In addition, Bain Company believes that the younger generation (Generation Y and Z) should have a tremendous demographic advantage in this area, accounting for 70% of global luxury spending, which shows the considerable potential for the luxury market [2]. Therefore, understanding the new generation’s tastes and catering to their needs of aesthetics will help luxury brands better enlarge their market share. One research pointed out that “young Chinese luxury consumption was founded to be more personally oriented” [3]. In other words, this group purchasing luxury goods is more driven by internal desires than external ones, reflecting that luxury spending is considered a hedonistic consumption. However, this phenomenon is due to the change in aesthetics and the pursuit of taste in young consumers.

Because there is no precise regulation on age span division, this study defines the young generation, including generations Y and Z. Generation Y, the same as millennials, is 26-40 years old, and generation Z is 6-25 years old. Chinese young people live in a safe environment, have a rich material life, and more importantly, most of them are the only child in a family who can enjoy a good education and a high quality of life from a young age. They are more focused on affective experience, personal desire, and brand excellence [3]. While older generation lived under challenging conditions and was short of material goods, and their consumption tended towards necessities of life rather than pleasure. Even when they buy luxury goods, their primary reason is to satisfy social status or as a gift to maintain social relationships. However, hedonic consumption is not difficult to be seen in the younger generation, and the popularity of overspending and installments is a good example. Young people who mainly receive financial support from their families, due to the limitation of finance and chasing
luxury crazily, premature consumption is increasing and even emerge the group called “the moonlight
clan” in China. The moonlight clan spent all their money before the beginning of next month. They
see spending money as a way to express their love of life, and they are willing to take on debt to get
the goods or services they want. The use of credit products such as Ant Credit Pay, a consumer credit
product launched in the Chinese market, has dramatically boosted credit consumption. According to
the McKinsey survey, in China, 36 percent of Gen Z respondents exceeded budget, reflecting impulse
buying and hedonism [4]. So young people buy luxury goods not just for “identity” but for “self-
expression”.

Luxury goods, as an extension of self, represent youth’s aesthetics. As hedonistic consumers, the
young generation is pursuing uniqueness and novelty, which show an immense interest in something
pleasant and appealing to the senses [5,6]. According to research by McKinsey, more than half of the
young Chinese consumers are more likely to buy bespoke products, while 53 percent prefer brands
that offer bespoke services [4]. Some brands have sensitive noticed the tremendous demand for
aesthetics and made some responses to it. Brands like YSL launched unique lipsticks that allowed
people to customize their personal information. The move was widely applauded by young consumers
[4]. As a result, “aesthetics” have become one of the main drivers of economic growth, so consumers
are willing to pay for increasingly expensive luxury goods. At the same time, the aesthetic economy
will change from “functional” to “hedonistic”. It no longer satisfies people’s productive needs but
satisfies spiritual pleasure.

1.2 Research Gap

Previous studies investigated the motivation of Chinese consumers to buy luxury goods, and they
pointed out that social status and relationships are essential drivers among all the factors [3,7-9].
However, there has been little research about youth aesthetics toward the luxury brand, with younger
generations becoming more attuned to their inner desires. Therefore, the limitations in this literature
triggered the interest to fill the gap and attempt to answer a question: How does Chanel cater to the
contemporary youth aesthetic? In this study, this paper selected makeup and skincare products as the
research area and decide to use Chanel as this research brand. In addition, this paper picks the period
from 2015 to 2022 because that is when social media and e-commerce are prevalent in China, which
significantly affect the daily lives of Chinese people. Although females make up a large proportion
of cosmetics consumption, men today pay more attention to their appearance, prompting them to buy
beauty products. Hence, this article will focus on young female consumers while considering young
male consumers as an influential topic. The study will analyze young people’s aesthetics and help
company managers develop appropriate strategies to align their products better, attract more younger
consumers and enlarge their market.

1.3 Structure of this paper

Given the above, the research will analyze the hypotheses from the following three dimensions,
namely, the adoption of male spokesmen, the production of sustainable products, and a more
diversified and personalized design style, to explore the luxury brand Chanel catering to the youth
aesthetic. To verify if the above hypothesis is correct, this paper will review relevant knowledge of
the 4Ps-Marketing Mix theory for analysis. And the paper will develop the corresponding
questionnaire for the research object as data support, and analyze the questionnaire by using
regression analysis for exploring the quantitative relationship between variables. And for the young
consumer group, the main object of the study, this paper focuses on the ABC (affect-behavior-
cognition) model of Attitudes or face-to-face interviews, to make an in-depth analysis of the
purchasing attitude and purchase intention of relevant consumer groups, as well as the influence on
the studied brand. At last, through the above analysis model results and conclusions, combined with
a large number of relevant pieces of literature, the paper obtains the expected hypothesis results.
2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition & Development of marketing mix theory

This paper adopts the marketing mix theory proposed by Neil Borden, whereby firms make marketing decisions to satisfy consumer needs through the analytical matching of relevant elements. Through a review of the relevant literature, this paper divides the emergence of marketing mix theory into three stages. The first was the first economic crisis when the failure of 'liberal' policies forced people to recognize the need for human intervention in the workings of the market, and people began to look for and conclude effective ways of managing it. In the second phase, after the Second World War, the 'marketing mix' began to be used extensively in the literature and industry information, providing the framework and practical support for the theory. In 1950, Neil Borden was the first to introduce the concept of “marketing mix”, a theory that initially consisted of 12 factors based on what a business needed to develop in society. This was followed by McCarthy’s (1960) famous 4Ps theory, which summarized the initial factors into four dimensions: product, price, place, and promotion, to further serve the marketing needs of the company and achieve greater economic benefits [10]. The third stage of development is from 1960 to the present. As the economy has developed, many scholars and experts have researched, enriched, and expanded the 4Ps theory.

2.2 Important results

Kotler defines the Marketing mix as “the mixture of controllable marketing variables that the firm uses to pursue the sought level of sales in the target market” [11]. Thus, in modern market analysis, marketing mix theory has endured and is often used as the basis for analysis.

The quality of a good product and the other incidental values it embodies will have a positive impact on consumers' purchasing behavior. Huang and Wang in 2012 demonstrated that the product has to satisfy basic consumer needs as well as psychological needs, such as the need for the fact that some people want to show off further by buying the product [12]. And for young consumers, some products or product packaging with popular and fashionable elements will be more attractive to them. Ji in 2016 pointed out that Sephora has been able to reinforce and increase consumer loyalty to a certain extent by selling high-quality products, increasing the likelihood of repeat purchases. And Sephora attracts more young consumers by changing seasonal trendy products [13]. In 2020, Halim et al. in 2020 showed that brands should improve the performance of their products while developing them so that the basic functions of the products are more attractive to consumers [14]. They should also focus on the incidental values of the product, such as the influence of religious factors on some consumers with faith and the influence of green consumption on environmentally friendly consumers. In the last year, Wang reported that Hermes uses durable leather materials and hand-sewn stitched saddles to create the impression of the brand's scarce and durable products to gain more purchases from consumers who seek quality and quality [15].

The influence of the element of place on consumer attitudes depends on the choice of different age groups and the areas with a different spending power corresponding to the brand. Firstly, with the development of the internet and changes in the means of payment, online shopping channels are growing and more and more consumers are choosing this method of shopping. Further research has proved that there are similarities and differences between both online shopping channels, brands can attract a younger group of consumers by using online shopping as a convenient shopping method [12, 14]. Therefore, some middle-aged and elderly people are the mainstays of offline shopping, and some complicated purchase procedures and payment methods can be inconvenient for them. Secondly, for offline sales, Ji in 2016 discovered that Sephora's shops are mostly located in large cities where consumers have more purchasing power, which facilitates the marketing of high-end products and further profits for the brand [13]. Similarly, another author Y Wang showed that Hermes' offline shops are located in economically developed areas, where there is a higher level of consumer base and it has also propelled Hermes to become the world's largest luxury goods company [15].
The impact of price on consumer attitudes depends on the psychological value that consumers in different consumption segments can afford and the basic needs of the product. Huang and Wang in 2012 explained that brands should price their basic products according to the needs of different consumers, while those that incorporate trends and fashion elements are priced high, targeting those who are willing to pay for these added values [12]. The article by Ji (2016) and Halim et al. (2020) stated that brands will adopt high pricing to target some loyal customers and consumers with high purchasing power who can bring more and longer-term profit to the company, even if the sales volume is less compared to the lower-priced products [13,14]. For customers with less spending power, but who are looking for a good product at a low price, the brand will adopt a low pricing policy to attract them and thus achieve high sales volume and profitability. As for Hermes, the author considered that only targets the high-end consumer market, high pricing is used to filter the consumer groups that the brand corresponds to and further deepen the brand image [15].

Promotion creates an impression of the brand in the mind of the consumer and facilitates the decision-making of some potential consumers when making a purchase. Some authors point out that promotions, such as advertising, are used to convey product information, and brand positioning and stimulate consumers' purchase ideas, attracting potential consumers so that they choose the brand when buying similar products [12,14]. For luxury brands pursuing high-end products, Wang found that Hermes rarely invests in advertising, choosing instead to use the wealthy and royalty to promote the brand, further deepening the brand's position as a noble and rare brand in the minds of consumers and attracting the propensity to buy from upper-class consumers in the same pursuit [15].

2.3 Summary

Overall, previous studies highlight price has always been an important factor affecting consumers' purchase choices. For luxury brands with high-end brand positioning, how to balance the brand positioning and appropriately reduce the price to attract consumers is still a big challenge. And in terms of sales channels, this paper will mainly focus on the purchasing channels of young consumer groups for Chanel luxury cosmetics and skincare products. According to the previous case study Hermès analysis. Luxury offline stores are located in economically developed areas with high-level consumer groups. However, it is debatable whether younger consumers with less money will choose them. Moreover, Chanel's luxury beauty and skincare products are one of the brand's few products that can be purchased online, so young consumers choose to buy related products online, which is still worth studying. In addition, some cases have found that luxury brands rarely invest in advertising, but with the emergence of young star-obsessed consumers, changing brand marketing strategies to expand the market is a good idea. At the same time, based on some studies, several lines of evidence suggest that high-quality products are the “life of the brand”, high quality makes the product seem more valuable to buy and makes the consumers look so superior. It has been mentioned in previous studies that product quality should be guaranteed while increasing its added value to attract the attention of young consumer groups. However, these studies do not focus on what is the added value that is most attractive to contemporary young consumers.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

This paper adopts the method of quantitative analysis, uses existing references and theories to form hypotheses and then tests these hypotheses by collecting relevant data and analyzing data. This study focused on using the method of questionnaire survey. After uniformly designing the questionnaire, the paper learned about the situation or seek opinions from the selected research objects. Previous research has shown that the most obvious difference between qualitative and quantitative methods is the criteria by which the data this research will use. At its most basic level, quantitative data numbers, while qualitative data focuses on words. In addition, according to Cohen in 1980, quantitative research is defined as social research that employs empirical methods and empirical
statements [16]. Cohen stated that an empirical statement is defined as a descriptive statement about what “is” the case in the “real world” rather than what “ought” to be the case. For the research object and hypothesis, this paper needs real and objective data to prove whether the hypothesis is correct. From the perspective of method implementation, quantitative questions are easier to measure and are answered by respondents. Qualitative questions, on the other hand, are subjective and difficult to measure. It is also difficult for investigators to answer these questions, and too many questions can lead to survey fatigue, thus affecting the accuracy of the study.

3.2 Data collection

Data were collected online from April 6, 2022 to April 8, 2022, using the questionnaire Star software. Easy-to-use samples and survey links are disseminated through social media platforms such as WeChat and QQ. The questionnaire includes basic information from respondents and consumers’ questions about purchasing Chanel cosmetics and skincare products. In addition, the 4P of marketing mix theory was used as the independent variable to set the questions in the questionnaire, referring to a large number of literature and previous research questionnaires, aiming at the corresponding questions of the four variables of place/product/promotion/place, and taking consumer willingness as the dependent variable. Finally, according to the data collected from the questionnaire, the regression analysis model was used to conduct variable analysis to verify the research hypothesis.

The respondents selected for this study are Generation X and Z and millennials because they are the main purchasers and users of luxury goods in the current multi-channel environment. Generation X is a loyal user of luxury brands, they have certain economic strength, and Millennials and Generation Z are newly emerging consumer groups in the new era. Although their economic strength is weak, some of them have just started work, and some of them are even students in school, according to literature references, they have gradually become mainstream consumers and are gradually infiltrating into high-end luxury brands [2]. A total of 150 subjects participated in this survey, and 142 answers were reserved for data analysis after preliminary screening and questionnaire validity and authenticity investigation. When filling in the questionnaire, the respondents used the form of selection for the basic information questions and used the form of scale for the variable questions in the questionnaire, from 1 to 5, to make reasonable choices.

3.3 Data analysis

The regression analysis method was adopted to explore the relationship between 4p and customer purchase intentions in this research. The regression analysis could reflect the correlation between phenomena by establishing appropriate mathematical models, and exploring the hypotheses in this paper deeply. Besides, for the data screening of the questionnaire, the questionnaire content was selected from the perspectives of repetition, similarity, relevance, and commonsense questions, so the content reliability is the screening condition. What’s more, test the answer time in advance, and according to the difficulty of the questions, the difficulty of the test, and consider pause, fatigue, and other reasons, set and screen the whole or even each question of the credible time. Finally, questionnaires with high authenticity were retained, and those with certain deviations and low authenticity were eliminated. Then, use Excel to conduct a regression analysis of independent variables and dependent variables.

According to Table 1 below, the profile of the respondents mainly included gender, age, education level, occupation, and income level. According to the data, the number of males is 28 representing 19% of the valid responses, and the number of females is 114 (81%). In addition, the majority of respondents were aged between 10-38 years old, and 24% were aged between 39-54 years old, and in terms of education level, the majority of respondents have a bachelor's degree, most of them are students or have income from the office. Because of this, the monthly income level reflected by the survey is mostly 3000 and below and 6000-10000 range.
Table 1. Profile of the survey respondents

| Demographics                          | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| Gender                               |                |
| Male                                 | 19%            |
| Female                               | 81%            |
| Age (years)                          |                |
| 10-23                                | 36%            |
| 24-38                                | 40%            |
| 39-54                                | 24%            |
| Education                            |                |
| High school or below                 | 28%            |
| Bachelor Degree                      | 64%            |
| Master Degree or above               | 8%             |
| Occupation                           |                |
| Student                              | 42%            |
| Office worker/ commuter              | 49%            |
| Freelance                            | 9%             |
| Monthly income (RMB)                 |                |
| 3000 and below                       | 39%            |
| 3000-6000                            | 8%             |
| 6000-10000                           | 38%            |
| 10000 and above                      | 15%            |

4. Result

This paper first analyzed Chanel’s cosmetic and skincare segment and young consumers by quantitative analysis. After collecting the data, the results were divided into two parts - regression statistics and analysis of variance - to describe separately. Regression analysis is a type of Inferential statistics where one or more sets of data are modeled by answering relevant questions to further test whether the hypothesis is valid [17].

In Table 2, Multiple R is less than and close to 1, indicating a strong positive relationship between independent variables & dependent variables, if 4P increases, the effect on consumer purchasing behavior will also increase. R Square is approximately equal to 0.85 and close to 1, a value that indicates a high degree of fit of the model to the actual situation. The low standard deviation of nearly 0.39 also indicates the validity of the data in question. Observations equal 142, representing a total of 142 sets of independent variables adopted in this regression analysis after screening.

In Table 3, the regression analysis of df represents a degree of freedom of 4, which means that the sample was analyzed with 4 parameters, which include price, product, promotion, and place. The significance F of the regression analysis is less than 0.05, which means that the hypothesis is acceptable. By comparison, among the Coefficients, price has the greatest influence on consumer purchase intentions, indicating that product price is the most important factor for consumers; followed by product and promotion on consumers in general, while place has the least influence on consumers, reflecting sideways the diversified shopping paths of consumers. Overall, the smaller the standard deviation of the four parameters, the higher the precision of the parameters, and the p-values are all less than 0.05, which means that the differences are due to inevitable selection. This means that the analysis is relevant and representative of the general public.

The results found clearly support the data on whether and how the 4P factors influence the buying behavior and thoughts of the new generation of young Chinese consumers, and further validate the proposed hypothesis.
Table 2. Regression Statistics

| Regression Statistics |       |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Multiple R            | 0.9217253 |
| R Square              | 0.849577529 |
| Adjusted R Square     | 0.845217458 |
| Standard Error        | 0.387606215 |
| Observations          | 142   |

Table 3. Analysis of variance

|         | df  | SS     | MS    | F       | Significance F |
|---------|-----|--------|-------|---------|----------------|
| Regression | 4   | 117.09837 | 29.27459249 | 194.854031 | 1.02324E-55  |
| Residual   | 138 | 20.73292374 | 0.150238578  |          |                |
| Total      | 142 | 137.8312937 |           |          |                |

Table 4. Coefficient

|         | Coefficients | Standard Error | t Stat  | P-value | Lower 95% | Upper 95% |
|---------|--------------|----------------|--------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| Intercept | 0.099050932  | 0.133852999 | 0.739997859 | 0.460558352 | -0.165617076 | 0.363718941 |
| price    | 0.293466363  | 0.063852932 | 4.59597318 | 9.62609E-06 | 0.167209734 | 0.419722991 |
| product  | 0.255665231  | 0.061815727 | 4.135925356 | 6.11035E-05 | 0.133436776 | 0.377893686 |
| promotion| 0.259096307  | 0.078767424 | 3.289384056 | 0.001274307 | 0.103349202 | 0.414843413 |
| place    | 0.170511879  | 0.076018003 | 2.24304603 | 0.026487798 | 0.020201213 | 0.320822545 |

5. Discussion

The younger generation has become the dominant force in China’s luxury market, and the consumer traits are related to luxury brand strategy and promoting them to change. The research discusses the relationship between price, product, promotion, place, and consumer purchase intention by using the marketing mix as research theory. The results showed that all 4Ps have positively correlated with willingness to buy, with consumers preferring affordable luxury goods, high-quality and environmentally friendly products, attractive advertising, and online shopping.

As one of the most critical factors in procurement, price influences consumers’ decision-making. In the survey, consumers showed sensitivity to prices, reflecting the significant impact of price increases on their purchase intention. While young consumers have great potential in the luxury market, their spending is constrained by a lack of funds. One reason is that young people, whose economies are primarily supported by their families, have yet to achieve economic freedom. What is more, the younger generation sees luxury goods as status symbols, opting to buy beauty products at relatively low prices to own luxury brands. Therefore, social values are also an underlying factor in the younger generation.

Cosmetics and skincare products are a matter of users’ healthy, and the result of the Product also shows that quality impacts consumers whether to buy. Furthermore, with increased knowledge, young people are more concerned about environmental issues, and environmental protection has become a trend in consumers’ aesthetic choices. After the questionnaire analysis, the younger generation is more likely to choose natural, eco-friendly cosmetics and expressed a strong desire to select such products in the future. The aesthetic not only indicates that young people take out the responsibility of society but also explains their inner pursuit of luxury consumption.

It can be seen that advertising, as a method, can significantly enlarge consumer purchase intention to buy. The younger generation desires something new, and they prefer promotions that excite their nerves and grab their attention. Attractive pop-up shops and celebrities are efficient promotions to catch the young generation. Many brands use celebrities to shape their brand image and use their
powerful influence to spur consumer spending. A study found that celebrity credibility, celebrity expertise, and celebrity attractiveness are three important factors influencing purchase intentions, brand attitudes, and advertising attitudes [18]. Therefore, it is vital to choose an appropriate spokesperson for luxury brands.

The result found that younger shoppers were more likely to shop online than offline and were satisfied with Chanel’s delivery speed, suggesting younger generations enjoyed the convenience of receiving items without leaving home. More importantly, store decoration is critical for consumers. As hedonic consumption becomes more and more popular, younger generations value the environment and ambiance of the store, which is also a factor that influences purchase intention.

This finding provides marketers with three tips. When it comes to advertising, brands can choose male celebrities to be their spokespeople, improving marketing efficiency. As women’s economic empowerment and social status increase, they have more expansive choices to buy the products they like. There also emerged a trend in male celebrities’ sexual consumption. Today, young Chinese females prefer “little fresh meat”, a male group that possesses characteristics of a young and excellent body [19]. By admiring these handsome men, Chinese women can obtain the excitement of visual and sensual, and satisfy inner fantasies by consuming [20]. What is more, young men in China are more and more concerned about their appearance, and they would choose some cosmetics to make them charming. In comparison, a male spokesman can convey a voice that explains that not only women can use cosmetics, but also men, conducting Chinese young men to purchase cosmetics [21].

Secondly, sustainability has become a trend among young consumers, which has inspired brands to develop products. For cosmetics, brands can use natural ingredients and environmentally friendly packaging to present a socially responsible brand image and cater to the aesthetic of young consumers.

Thirdly, young consumers show a strong preference for freshness and diversity. They like to pursue unique products, be able to present their unique personality, and shape their image. Therefore, designing diversified products with exquisite packaging and unique modeling is an excellent way to surprise consumers. However, it is essential to note that the brand’s design should be bold but not conflict with the brand image and confuse consumers.

This study shows that young consumers are aesthetically driven by sustainability, and they also prefer affordable luxury products and online shopping. In addition, male advocates can stimulate younger consumers to buy. This finding, consistent with previous studies, suggests that the use of male advocates as a marketing strategy has certain attractions [22, 23].

6. Conclusions

China, an enormous potential consumer market, contributes significantly to luxury consumption. And the intensive desire and strong spending power of the Chinese young generation have attracted public attention, which also triggers the interest to study this field. To explore how Chanel caters to contemporary youth aesthetics, the research used marketing mix theory and a questionnaire survey. It introduced Chanel as the research brand, makeup and skincare as the research product, and young females as the major topic. The survey collected 142 valid questionnaires and analyzed the relationship between 4ps with purchase intention to get the final result. The results showed that the young generation prefers affordable luxury goods and online shopping. More importantly, they have a more vital willingness to choose eco-friendly products. Besides, according to quantities research and respondents’ answers, the study finally found that the spokesman is essential to consumers, and using male spokespeople has a stronger purchase motivation in young females.

This discovery has significant implications in luxury marketing to fulfill the young customers’ needs and expand existing target segments to gain a larger market share. Above all, there are some suggestions for brand managers. Nowadays, the young generation desires novelty to express itself, presenting personal taste and forming individual images through product selection. Thus, brands need to be bolder in their designs while avoiding conflict with their positioning. Because of the increasing
social responsibility, sustainable products have become popular among young people. In this case, the brand should pay more attention to developing eco-friendly products, like using natural ingredients and recycling packages. Lastly, it is an excellent way to adopt a male spokesperson to stimulate cosmetics sales, which can enlarge females’ purchase intention and conduct young males to buy.

There are some limitations to the study. According to the survey, female respondents are far more than male respondents, and because of a lack of sufficient data, this research could not study men in detail. In addition, the research just selected some critical traits of the younger generation, whereas numerous characteristics remain unexplored, And The extent of each characteristic’s impact on young people is also not clear. However, this paper has a certain generality that can guide other products to better sales besides makeup and skincare. Finally, as an emerging beauty product community, young men are often left out of the public eye, so the study needs to invest more in studying their preferences, identifying the differences between young women, and producing more appropriate beauty products and more accurate marketing strategies for them. In addition, diversity, as a crucial factor in brand, future studies can explore the extent to which product diversity and uniqueness influence young consumers’ purchases and the relationship between them.

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