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Marketing Ethical Value and Sustainable Leadership Practices: A Panacea for Integrating Leadership among Stakeholders in Nigeria, West Africa

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Abstract: The study focused on marketing ethical value and sustainable leadership practices which gear towards integrating leadership. The specific objectives were to examine the effect of honesty, transparency and accountability on sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria. This study utilized survey research design. Information was gathered from primary source. The population of the study comprised of selected public and private sector employees across two geopolitical zones (North Central and South West) in Nigeria includes Kogi State and Ekiti state, Nigeria. Convenience sampling technique was used to select 350 respondents from the area for easy collection of data, since the selected

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respondents were not residing at the same place. Simple linear regression statistical tool was used to test the hypothesis through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The findings show that honesty, transparency, accountability have significant effect on sustainable leadership in Nigeria. The study therefore recommends that both business organisation managers and government stakeholders should display honesty to attract the loyalty of their subordinates and followers, they should imbibe the spirit of transparency in their course of discharging their duties to foster peace and commitment among their subordinates and followers. and Accountability should be the focus of both business organisation manager and stakeholder to enhance trust and positive contribution of subordinate and followers towards achievement of desire objectives.

Keywords: Ethical Value, Honesty, Marketing, Sustainable Leadership, Transparency

Introduction

Across the globe every nation's firm and economy strength depend on good leadership driven. When leaders imbibe ethical standard, it will reflect on both business firms and economy in the country. To achieve this dream, there is need to affiliate marketing ethical value towards sustainable leadership practices in most developing countries like Nigeria. Marketing ethical value focuses on honesty, transparency, responsibility, accountability and human relationship. This concept encourages sustainable leadership practice in the country in turn enhances economic growth and development. In view of marketing ethical value, marketers and stakeholders are requires to promote products and services honestly and in good faith. They are mandate not to employ deceptive marketing tactics, but instead to provide truthful and honesty information about products' cost, design, delivery, and other features. Additionally, marketers are not to engage in harmful or illegal actions, such as selling dangerous products (American Marketing Association, 2023). Ethics refers to moral judgment and standard for decisions and actions as

right or wrong based on accepted principles of behaviour. Thus, in marketing ethics present moral principles and standard that define right and wrong behaviour in marketing. Most major ethical issues are formalized by laws and regulations in respect to the standards of society. But marketing ethics exceeds legal issues, which is why ethical marketing solutions encourages mutual understanding between society and businesses (Marinova, 2013).

Ethical marketing leadership requires fulfilling the expectations and desire of each stakeholder fairly, honestly for enhancing turnover, profitability, market share, and image of the organisation. Marketing ethics refers to the philosophical evaluation and examination, from a moral standpoint, of particular marketing issues that are matters of moral judgment. Ethical marketing generally results in a more socially responsible and culturally sensitive business community. The establishment of marketing ethics has the potential and believe to benefit society as a whole, both in the short- and long-term (Murphy et al., 2005)

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Marketing ethical value emphasizes on transparent, trustworthy, honesty and responsible personnel and organizational marketing policies and actions, exhibits integrity and fairness to consumers and other stakeholders. It promotes sustainable leadership practices in business organisation which can positively enhance nation's economy. Sustainable leader is someone who is capable of defining, implement plans, strategies and management methods that are consistent. Sustainable leadership practices involve utilising the resources of their organizations to solve environmental and social problems creating value for shareholders (Fatoki, 2021). Sustainable leadership practices involve in enhancing the innovative thinking skills of their employees by facilitating knowledge sharing across the organization. Sustainable leadership practices also promote innovation by providing employees with the confidence, assurance and support to generate new ideas (Norena-Chavez and Thalassinos, 2022).

The study examines the effect of marketing ethical value on sustainable leadership practices towards integrating leadership in Nigeria, West Africa.

Statement of the problem

Marketing ethical value is the study of peoples' rights and duties, the moral rules that people apply in making decisions, and the nature of relationships among people. Ethical standards and practices form an important part of business practice. In the latter part of the twentieth century and spreading into the first decade twenty-first century, there has been a regrettable decline of ethical standards in business (Crosbie, 2008).

Resultant to this decline has been poor financial performance and eventual insolvency of large corporations. Gill (2011), posits that such decline is the outcome of leader actions and behaviour, that leadership carries the blame for their prevalence; this is because corporate culture and business ethics are established and propagated by proprietors of organizations and maintained by their successors. While one aspect of ethics clearly believes that ethical behaviour can be determined by the focus on following laws and regulations, ethical leadership should embrace ethics more widely. Organizations should not adhere in doing the right thing in terms of what the regulations say, but to express ethics in a wider framework of social justice and sustainable. Display and exhibiting of poor ethics and integrity in public organizations, engenders decreased trust in government and may precipitate an implosion of the country's political system. Heres and Lasthuizen (2010) posit that managers of an organization are expected to possess ethical leadership, safeguard and promote moral values and manage any social tensions that may obtain from poor economic performance. This study tends to sensitize both business organisation and government on the effect of marketing ethical value on sustainable leadership practice towards integrating leadership in Nigeria, west Africa.

Moreover, based on my empirical search the study of marketing ethical value on sustainable leadership practices towards integrating leadership in Nigeria, west Africa had not been conducted both in Nigeria and across the globe. It is the gap that this study attempts to fill comprehensively

Objectives of the study

- i) To examine the effect of honesty, on sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria.
- ii) To examine the effect of, transparency on sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria.
- iii) To examine the effect accountability on sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

Marketing ethical value

Marketing ethical value is a technique that highlights a company's values—honesty, transparency, responsibility, or adherence to [fair trade](#) principles—as a promotional strategy. These companies communicate their business ethics in marketing materials to reach target audiences with similar principles. While ethical marketing teams focus on [advertising](#) a product or service and making a profit, they aim to do so while upholding their ethical standards. Ethical marketing refers to the application of marketing ethics into the marketing process. Briefly, marketing ethics refers to the philosophical examination, from a moral standpoint, of particular marketing issues that are matters of moral judgment. Ethical marketing generally results in a more socially responsible and culturally sensitive business community. The establishment of marketing ethics has the potential to benefit society as a whole, both in the short- and long-term. Ethical marketing should be part of business ethics in the sense that marketing forms a significant part of any business model. Study of Ethical marketing should be included in applied ethics and involves evaluation, examination of whether or not an honest and factual representation of a product or service has been delivered in a framework of cultural and social values. (Murphy, Gene, Norman, and Thomas,

2005). Marketing ethical values are the general set of guide lines comprising moral principles and values that compulsory need to be followed with respect to operation and regulation of marketing and also during any kind of marketing communication. It focuses on principles and standards that define collective acceptable marketing conduct. Marketing ethical values emphasizes on transparent, trustworthy, honesty and responsible personal and organizational marketing policies and actions and exhibits integrity and fairness to consumers and other stakeholders. It can be regarded as a process whereby the grounds of moral judgments and rules of conduct governing marketing decisions and marketing situations are inquired. Marketing ethical values focus on honesty, accountability, fairness, responsibility, and being responsive towards social and environmental issues can guide complex marketing decisions in the context of an organization (Ghosh, 2020). Ethical marketers evaluate their decisions across business and a moral perspective. An ethics-based marketing approach lay emphasis on the benefits that a product provides to customers and the positive impact it has on socially responsible or environmental causes (Indeed, 2024).

Importance of Marketing ethical values

The Importance of Marketing ethical values are as follows (Ghosh, 2020)

- 1) Customer loyalty – It assists the company to win the trust and loyalty of its customers on the long-term basis as it is the basic human nature to focus on those products that are genuine and authentic in nature.
- 2) Long-term gains – There are various long-term gains and benefit attached to

moral principles and values in marketing like customer loyalty, high credibility in the market, increased market share, enhanced brand value, higher sales, and elevated revenues.

- 3) Builds credibility – When the company adhere the ethics of marketing, it slowly and gradually builds its distinctive niche in the market as a genuine or original and authentic brand that also results in the factor of credibility building for the company within the industry among its peers, contemporaries, investors, and other stakeholders and also in the minds of the customers as well.
- 4) Displays rich culture – When the company adhere to the ethics of marketing, the internal environment comprising of the staff and employees is highly motivated and continuously strives to assist the management attain the overall business objectives. They take immense pride in working for such a company. This enhances the rich and genuine culture of the firm in the market.
- 5) Attracts talent – It assist the company to attract the talented professionals who wish to get associated with the company.
- 6) Attains financial goals – By following the ethics of marketing, a firm is in a position to attract financial support from the market which in turn will help in launching the new line of products in the market, tap new market locations, and try out innovative marketing and promotion techniques.
- 7) Enhanced brand value – Practicing moral principles and values in marketing results in the enhanced brand value of the firm, making it the most trustworthy and reliable brand in the market. (Ghosh, 2020).

Principles of ethically based marketing

The following are some common

principles for marketing ethical value (Indeed, 2024; MasterClass, 2022):

Honesty

An important component of ethics-based marketing is the use of honesty in marketing communications. For business leaders and marketers, it's crucial that they convey the truth about their company's products and services to protect the consumer's health, well-being, and rights. For example, food products commonly contain labels listing the ingredients and nutritional information. Nutritional labels are important to people with allergies because they provide information about the product's ingredients.

Legality

A vital aspect of ethical marketing involves compliance with all government regulations, environmental standards, and industry standards. By complying with regulations, a business can establish its commitment to providing exceptional quality and customer service to its customers. Standards and regulations protect the liability and interests of businesses and enable them to continue to operate.

Behaviour

Marketing ethics require all members of the marketing team to adhere to high ethical standards. A company may set expectations for its employees regarding respect for the rights of others. For example, team members with an ethical approach to customer service may practise empathy and honesty.

Health and safety

The safety of their customers is a top priority for businesses and marketing teams operating ethically. Marketing professionals can uphold this principle by

educating consumers, protecting their privacy, and respecting their civil and human rights. It's also beneficial for companies to ensure the physical safety and mental health of their employees. For example, a company may offer health and wellness benefits and programs to its employees.

Transparency

Transparency within marketing ethics means disclosing the details of the company's processes and behaviour. For example, a company may publish information regarding product development. The process also refers to having honest conversations about ethical issues. For organizations to remain accountable to their customers and stakeholders, it's crucial to be straightforward about their history, current practices, and future goals.

- **Quality:** Consumers can set realistic expectations for products if businesses provide honest information about the quality of the product.
- **Pricing:** Businesses can gain customers and build trust by being transparent about prices, pricing strategies, and additional charges.
- **Suppliers:** When organizations disclose the partners and networks they support and pay, consumers can gain a deeper understanding of who they're supporting through their purchases.
- **Customer satisfaction:** When businesses display customer reviews on their websites and in advertisements, they can develop their credibility and maintain a transparent approach to customer satisfaction.

Conscious practices

To protect communities and the environment, companies may commit to

conscious practices. Conscious practices include fair trade, fair wages, and environmentally sustainable practices and materials. A company may also engage in conscious practices by promoting volunteerism, making a positive impact on the environment, and supporting charitable institutions.

Fairness: Establishing fairness as a decision-making principle means companies commit to fair prices, better wages, and sustainable development.

Responsibility: Businesses may emphasize their responsibility in several ways, including their obligation to provide a reliable product or service, support social causes, give back to communities, treat their employees with respect, or protect the environment through sustainable practices.

Sustainable leadership practices

Sustainable leadership practices is value based that focuses on long term, and the promotion of sustainability and the common good (Timmer, Creech, & Buckler, 2007). Sustainable leadership lay emphasis on providing adequate improvement to the well-being of stakeholders (employees, customers, shareholders, community) towards maximizing profit for the organization.

Sustainable leadership practice cannot be effective consummating the following attitude such as systemic, interdisciplinary understanding; emotional intelligence and a caring attitude; values orientation that shapes culture; a strong vision for making a difference; an inclusive style that engenders trust; a willingness to innovate and be radical; and a long-term perspective on impacts. In addition, they must implement a number of initiatives to establish and maintain the foundation for sustainability throughout their

organizations including training and staff development programs, proactively striving for amicable labour relations, development of strategies for staff retention, shifting compensation programs toward metrics that valued contributions to customer loyalty and to innovation, promoting environmental and social responsibility, initiating communications with multiple stakeholders and transparently taking into account and balancing their interests, and developing and embedding a shared vision for the goals of the business (Gutterman, 2023). Thus, sustainable leadership practice deals with values that are geared towards promoting and developing a just and sustainable future that will help in embracing major changes in ethics and values as they affect our modern society. It simply means a situation where business leaders manage their businesses taking into account the interest of the people, profit and the universe (Mohammed, Ndafatima & Danjuma, 2023). It is a concept that obliges institutions to change their behaviour and systems, and transform them into sustainable systems, as a means to conserve their human, material and natural resources (Al-Tablawy, 2018).

Sustainable leadership practices are process of influence that delivers direction, alignment and commitment and aims to address environmental, social and long-term sustainable development (Suriyankietkaew, 2016; Visser & Courtice, 2011). Sustainable leadership practices comprise those behaviours and practices that create lasting value for all stakeholders, such as the society, environment and future generations at large (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011; 2010). Sustainable leadership practices are vulnerable to a variety of external events

such as mergers and acquisitions, which bring in new employees, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders who may not share the core values of sustainability that had been developed prior to the transaction; taking on additional major shareholders who may have different ideas about what constitutes acceptable performance for the business; or the hiring of new executives who have not familiar with the organizational cultures and may bring different values from their prior positions. Sustainable leadership practices involves the conscious individual / collective activities and actions aimed at nurturing and sustaining economic, environment and societal well-being of businesses and their host communities (Turner et al, 2002). It revolves around finding solutions to organizational, social, and economic problems change and development, and its ability to influence and motivate workers and society by imposing sustainable knowledge in its principles without neglecting the past, which leads to improving the present and the future (Zulkiffli & Latifi, 2016)

Conceptual Model of Marketing Ethical Value and Sustainable Leadership Practices

Conceptual model of marketing ethical value and sustainable leadership practices is the model that showcase marketing ethical value which are measure by honesty, transparency and accountability which drives sustainable leadership practices to enhance business firm and nation's economy. Marketing ethical values emphasizes on transparent, trustworthy, and responsible personal and organizational marketing policies and actions and exhibits integrity and fairness to consumers and other stakeholders. It can be regarded as a process whereby the

grounds of moral judgments and rules of conduct governing marketing decisions and marketing situations. When marketing ethical value are well maintained in business firm through the exhibition of honesty, transparency and accountability it will promote sustainable leadership practices which gear towards achieving desire objective.

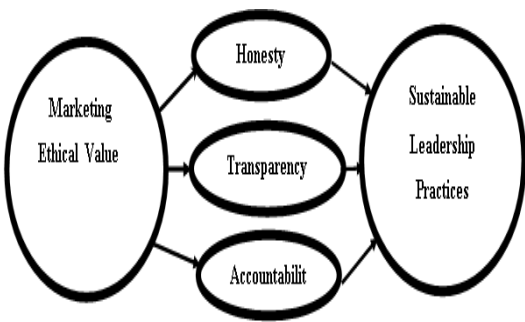


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Marketing Ethical Value and Sustainable Leadership Practices
Source: Researcher 2024

Methodology

This study utilized survey research design. Information was gathered from primary source. The population of the study comprised of selected public and private sector employees across two geopolitical zones (North Central and South West) in Nigeria includes Kogi State and Ekiti state, Nigeria. Convenience sampling technique was

used to select 350 respondents from the study area for easy collection of data, since the selected respondents were not residing at the same place. Questions structured on a 5-point Likert scale were used in the survey to obtain responses from participants. Content validity was used to determine the validity of the scale, and the reliability test value was calculated as 0.91 using the Cronbach Alpha test. A simple linear regression statistical tool was used to test the hypothesis via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.

Research hypothesis One

Table 1
Regression Model Summary^b H1

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
H1	.825 ^a	.680	.640	30.79529

a. Predictors: (Constant), Honesty
b. Dependent Variable: Leadership
Source: SPSS Version 20

Table 2
ANOVA^a H1

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
H1	Regression	16131.200	1	16131.200	17.010	.003 ^b
	Residual	7586.800	8	948.350		
	Total	23718.000	9			

a. Dependent Variable: Leadership
b. Predictors: (Constant), Honesty

H₀₁: honesty has no significant effect on sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria

Source: SPSS Version 20
Table 3
Coefficients

Model	Unstandardised Coeff.		Standardized Coeff.	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	-50.200	22.838		-2.198	.059		
Honesty	28.400	6.886	.825	4.124	.003	1.000	1.000

Decision Rule

According to Table 2, the overall results of the regression analyses were significant ($p = 0.003 < 0.05$), so the results support the first hypothesis. We reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative that honesty has played a significant role in the sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria. The result suggested that honesty can be used to predict sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria; So, if honesty change, the sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria can also improve. Based on the R-squared value of (0.68), honesty can explain 68.0% of the variance in sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria. The F test calculated by analysis of variance (ANOVA) is 17.010 with coefficient of the regression showed ($\beta=.825$, $t=4.124$) and the significance associated with a p value of 0.003 (p value <0.05) is significant. It seems that simple regression fits the data well.

Research hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Transparency has no significant effect on sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria

Table 3
Regression Model Summary^a H2

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
H2	.850 ^a	.722	.688	26.80846

a. Predictors: (Constant), Transparent
b. Dependent Variable: Leadership
Source: SPSS Version 20

Table 4
ANOVA^a H2

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	14960.450	1	14960.450	20.816	.002 ^b
Residual	5749.550	8	718.694		
Total	20710.000	9			

a. Dependent Variable: Leadership
b. Predictors: (Constant), Transparent
Source: SPSS Version 20

Table 5
Coefficients

Model	Unstandardised Coeff.		Standardized Coeff.	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	-47.050	19.882		-2.366	.045		
Transparent	27.350	5.995	.850	4.562	.002	1.000	1.000

According to Table 4, the overall results of the regression analyses were significant ($p = 0.002 < 0.05$), so the results support the first hypothesis. We reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative that transparency has played a significant role in the sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria. The result suggested that transparency can be used to predict sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria; So, if transparency change, the sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria can also improve. Based on the R-squared value of (0.722), transparency can explain 72.2% of the variance in sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria. The F test calculated by analysis of variance (ANOVA) is 20.816 with coefficient of the regression showed ($\beta=.850$, $t= 4.562$) and the significance associated with a p value of 0.002 (p value <0.05) is significant. It seems that simple regression fits the data well.

Research hypothesis Three

H₀₃: Accountability has no significant effect on sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria

Table 5

Regression Model Summary^b H3

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
H3	.849 ^a	.721	.687	26.42868

a. Predictors: (Constant), Accountability

b. Dependent Variable: Leadership

Source: SPSS Version 20

Table 6

ANOVA^a H3

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
H3	Regression	14472.200	1	14472.200	20.720	.002 ^b
	Residual	5587.800	8	698.475		
	Total	20060.000	9			

a. Dependent Variable: Leadership

b. Predictors: (Constant), Accountability

Source: SPSS Version 20

Table 7

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardised Coeff.		Standardized Coeff.	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	-45.700	19.600		-2.332	.048		
	26.900	5.910	.849	4.552	.002	1.000	1.000

According to Table 6, the overall results of the regression analyses were significant ($p = 0.002 < 0.05$), so the results support the first hypothesis. We reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative that accountability has played a significant role in the sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria. The result suggested that accountability can be used to predict sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria; So, if accountability change, the sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria can also improve. Based on the R-squared value of (0.721), accountability can explain 72.1% of the variance in sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria. The F test calculated by analysis of variance (ANOVA) is 20.720 with coefficient of the regression showed ($\beta=.849$, $t= 4.552$) and the significance associated with a p value of 0.002 (p value <0.05) is significant. It

seems that simple regression fits the data well.

Discussion of findings

The first hypothesis testifies that honesty has played a significant role in the sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria. Since the R-squared value of (0.68), honesty can explain 68.0% of the variance in sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria. The F test calculated by analysis of variance (ANOVA) is 17.010 with coefficient of the regression showed ($\beta=.825$, $t=4.124$) and the significance associated with a p value of 0.003 (p value <0.05) is significant. Rowinski, (2023) affirm the finding that Leadership with honesty is essential for building trust, fostering a positive work culture, and driving successful outcomes. Honesty in leadership means being transparent, sincere, and straightforward with your team and stakeholders. It involves being open about your intentions, decisions, and actions, as well as being willing to admit your mistakes and learn from them.

The second hypothesis signifies that transparency has played a significant role in the sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria. Since the R-squared value of (0.722), transparency can explain 72.2% of the variance in sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria. The F test calculated by analysis of variance (ANOVA) is 20.816 with coefficient of the regression showed ($\beta=.850$, $t= 4.562$) and the significance associated with a p value of 0.002 (p value <0.05) is significant. Transparency helps you build stronger relationships with your customers and employees. Employees will have confidence in management and the decisions made in the company because

they know exactly what happened and why. This makes them proud of the company they work for and provides a sense of purpose in their work. Transparency also supports effective communication in the workplace. This leads to new and fresh ideas, better ideas, etc. It leads, because employees at feel empowered to share their ideas. This results in a stronger and better employee-employee relationship (Rabah, 2022).

The third hypothesis signifies that accountability has played a significant role in the sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria. Since the R-squared value of (0. 721), accountability can explain 72.1% of the variance in sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria. The F test calculated by analysis of variance (ANOVA) is 20.720 with coefficient of the regression showed ($\beta=.849$, $t= 4.552$) and the significance associated with a p value of 0.002 (p value <0.05) is significant. This finding was affirmed by Botwin, (2021) asserted that accountability is a skill that requires leaders to own up to their actions, decisions, and mistakes. It's also the ability to follow up on the commitments they have made within an organization and its people. Finally, real accountability requires [leaders to take responsibility](#) and pride in the art of encouraging and guiding their employees.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings this study shows that honesty, transparency and accountability have played a significant role in the sustainable leadership practices in Nigeria.

Marketing ethical values emphasizes on transparent, trustworthy, and responsible personal and organizational marketing

policies and actions and exhibits integrity and fairness to consumers and other stakeholders. It can be regarded as a process whereby the grounds of moral judgments and rules of conduct governing marketing decisions and marketing situations are inquired. Marketing ethical values focus on honesty, fairness, responsibility, and being responsive towards social and environmental issues can guide complex marketing decisions in the context of an organization.

The study attracts the following recommendations:

- 1) Both business organisation managers and government stakeholders should display honesty to attract the loyalty of their subordinates and followers.
- 2) They should imbibe the spirit of transparency in their course of discharging their duties to foster peace and commitment among their subordinates and followers.
- 3) Accountability should be the focus of both business organisation manager and stakeholder to enhance trust and positive contribution of subordinate and followers towards achievement of desire objective.

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