



TRENDSPOTTING STUDY: The Telecommunications Industry in the Philippines

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Introduction

On 29 March 1994, the internet first became available in the Philippines. The Philippine Network Foundation, also known as PHNet, connected the country to the US's Sprintlink. Prior to this, the Philippines did not have a TCP/IP data network available, with the various data networks in operation run by private companies or groups. Through time, more internet service providers like Converge, Globe, PLDT, and Smart have emerged, and developed more plans which offer good internet connection.

However, there have been thousands of feedback from consumers and critics on the benefits and lapses in the services that Philippine ISPs offer.

Isentia has thus set out to uncover discussions and consumer sentiments on how they experience the services provided by Philippine ISPs.



About the Report

This report aims to provide the telecommunications industry with an understanding of the consumers' behaviors. Specifically, what and how netizens talk about their Internet Service Providers (ISPs) on different social media platforms.

In terms of **media type**, this report includes materials from:

Social Media

- Twitter
- Facebook

The date range for this study is Feb 25 – Mar 26, 2021.

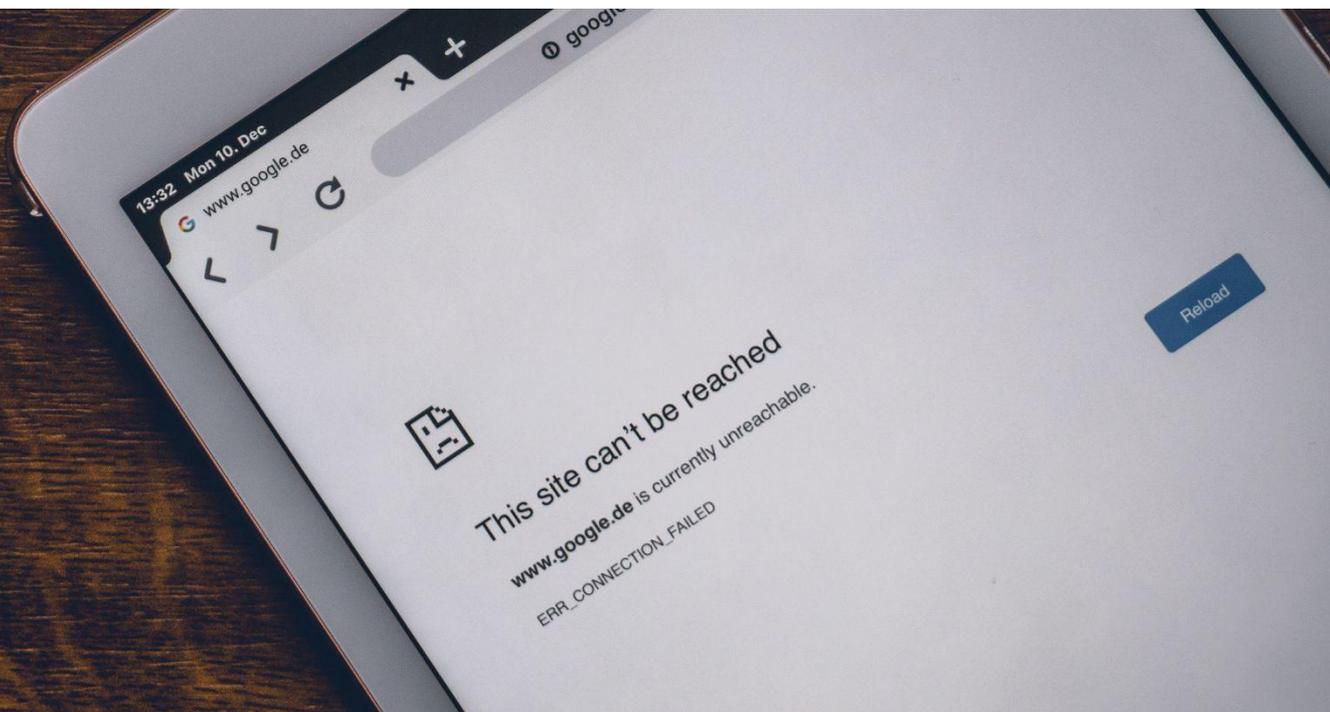


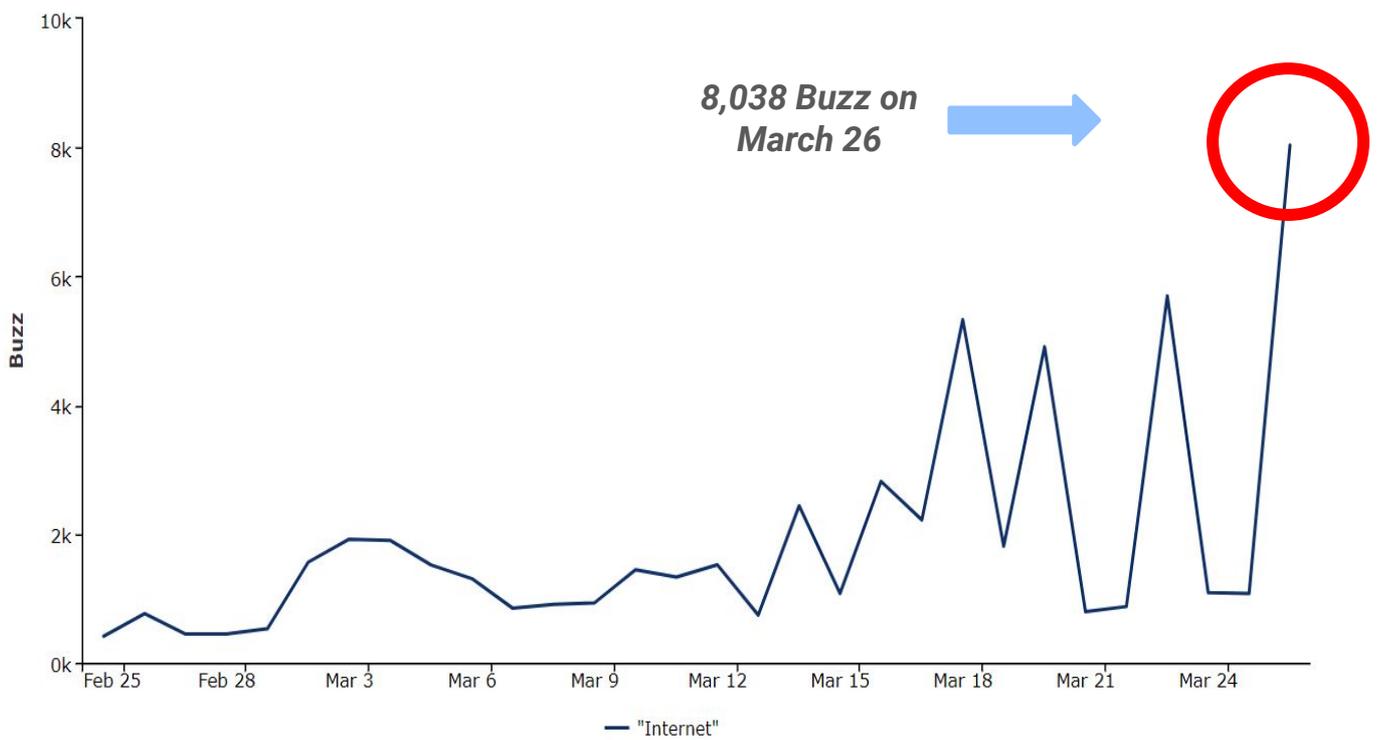
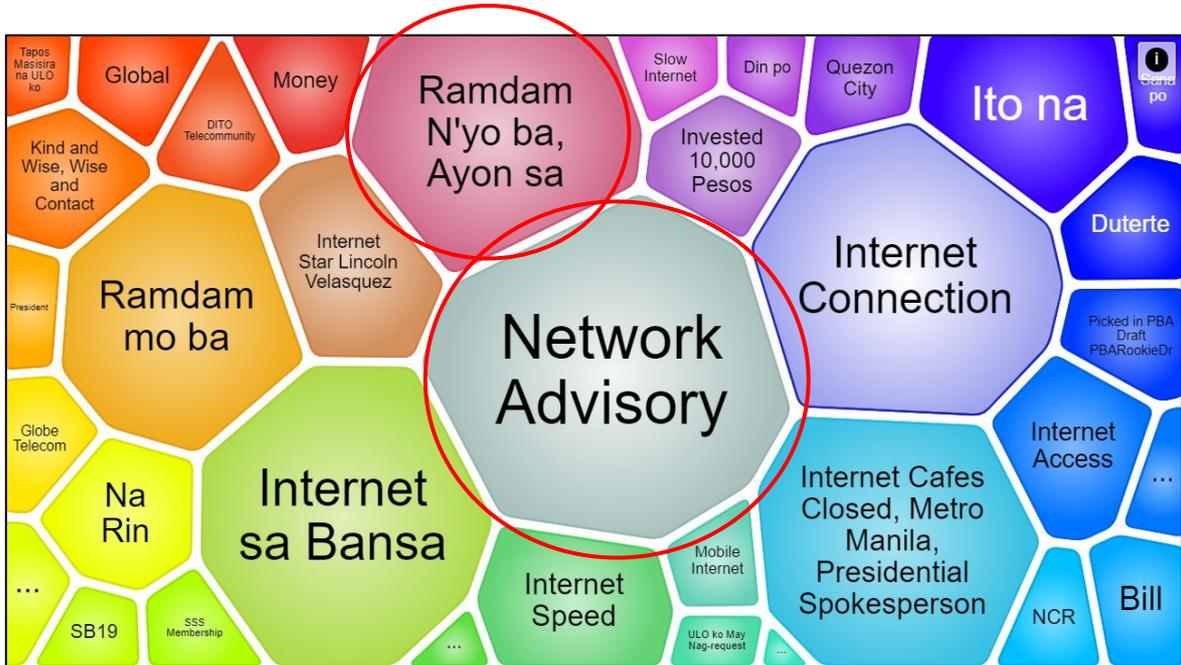
Dipping your toes into Internet conversations

The influx of buzz on **March 26** can be attributed to **PLDT** posting an advisory that user may experience slow or intermittent internet services. The brand that day was the **#1 trending on Twitter with over 38,000 tweets** directed to the brand, mostly with negative comments from its subscribers.

The brand responded with a statement justifying the poor internet services that day but the damage has already been done.

A large contributor to the buzz was the phrase **“Ramdam n’yo ba/ Ramdam mo ba?”** This phrase relates to the post-2020 report that internet speed both for mobile and broadband had a significant increase of about 297% for broadband and 201% for mobile. This increase in mbps can be attributed to President Rodrigo Duterte’s directive to Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to improve their service before the year ends.



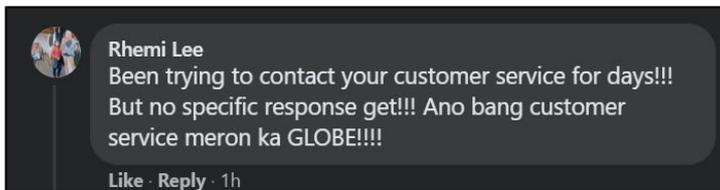


Data from Isentia's workbench. According to Isentia data, there has been 8,038 Buzz on the keyword 'Internet' on 26 March.

Audience Feedback to Network Providers

Globe Telecom: “We don’t want you to feel that way, Ryan.”

Following **GLOBE**'s customer service advisory, netizens took to the comments section to air their frustrations, mostly on how **repetitive and insulting** it is for consumers that network providers answered consumers' concerns through **automated replies that resulted in nothing.**



115,986 Total Buzz (GLOBE+Internet)

SMART: “A good endorser will not guarantee a good service...”

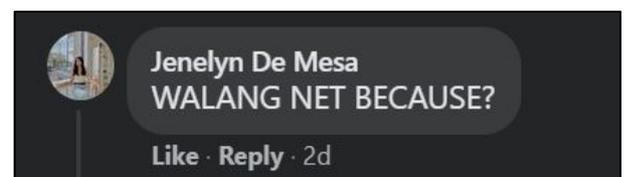
The driving buzz for **SMART** were conversations on their newest endorser, **Chris Evans**. Divisive is the word best used to describe this trend due to a mix of positive and negative feedback. Netizens said that there is **no need for a foreign endorser or that the company needs to improve their telco service first before investing in a famous endorser.**



114,787 Total Buzz (SMART+Internet)

Converge: “Walang net, because?”

The use of **memes** on **CONVERGE**'s Facebook posts is something unique for the brand. However, they were **not safe from complaints** being present in the comments section of their posts. Other brands outside of the telecommunications industry make use of memes – this strategy of using memes for digital marketing spurs buzz and engagements.



58,221 Total Buzz (CONVERGE+Internet)

A New Telco Player Enters

With lingering news and mentions since 2019 on a **new industry player** entering the Philippine market – and its franchise being approved early this March 2021 – more are now contemplating **whether to continue their subscription with their current ISPs or switch** to the new and promising services that the new player commits to provide.

According to Isentia data, there was a total of **449,239 buzz** with the **keywords DITO + Telecommunications**.



DITO Telecommunity, the new internet service provider in the Philippines



DITO: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

The good: “DITO NA TAYO”

Competition leads to a better market dynamic, thus, better economic growth. But does that mean better services? Following consumers having to experience **hiccups** with their ISPs, some are more **inclined to switch** to the new industry player.



The bad: 48 years to arrive

The new telco company is **not safe from criticisms**. Netizens are experiencing **bad service** in terms of the roll-out of their sims necessary for their services to work, specifically with the delivery of their sim cards. Not only that, but netizens also **took offence that certain high-end phones are the only ones compatible with their mobile data services**.

The ugly: “To spy or not to spy?”

The new telco company was not safe from netizens’ assumptions. The move from the administration to allow the telco company to build cell towers in military camps received unfavourable feedback, especially from those who oppose the current administration. Most stated that the telco company is a **medium for China to spy, risking the security and privacy of Filipinos**.

Key Takeaways

The telecommunications industry is always at the netizens' crosshairs with bullets of criticism ready to pour down at the comment sections. Especially when it comes to the internet service that they provide.

The recurring negatives:

- **Slow** download speed and upload speed
- **Hiccups and inconsistency** of their connections
- The **automated replies** that just irritates more the customer
- **Network advisories** about maintenance that hinders netizens' day-to-day processes (*work, school, business*)
- **"Fast billing, slow service"**



What are customers looking for?

STREAMLINE AUTOMATED REPLIES

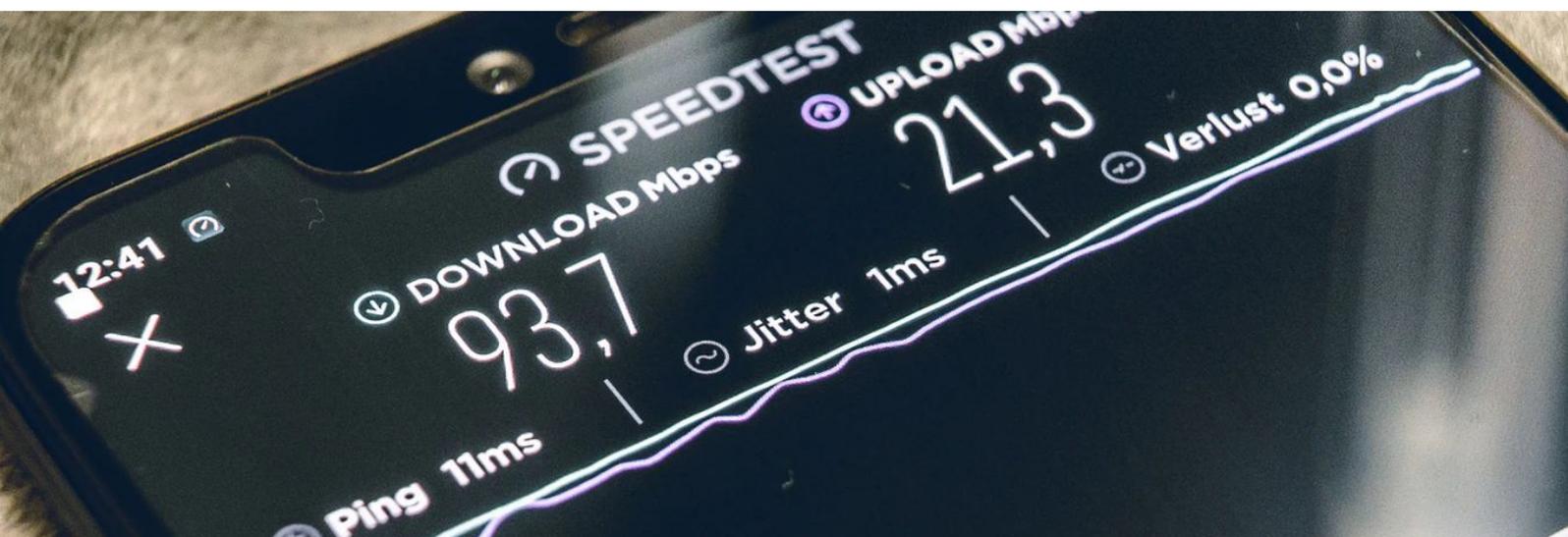
The majority of the replies to the automated messages that each company provided were negative, including profanities to emphasize their frustrations. The manner of how companies respond to customer issues is a source of rabid responses. Invest more in improving customer service by streamlining and personalizing responses. How you respond to their concerns greatly reflects and affects the image of your brand.

Way to streamline:

- Hold workshops to train frontliners who respond to customer complaints to improve how they react and personalize their responses.

FOLLOW UP

Netizens see the comments section as an avenue to spew out their concerns over the services telco companies provide. Most of them already having service IDs, reference numbers, or tickets as to when their services can be fixed but still, scheduled fixes are not followed. To avoid being bombarded with comments of unfavorable nature, telco companies can migrate discussions to a more private avenue to address these concerns – **SMS, private messages, and emails.**

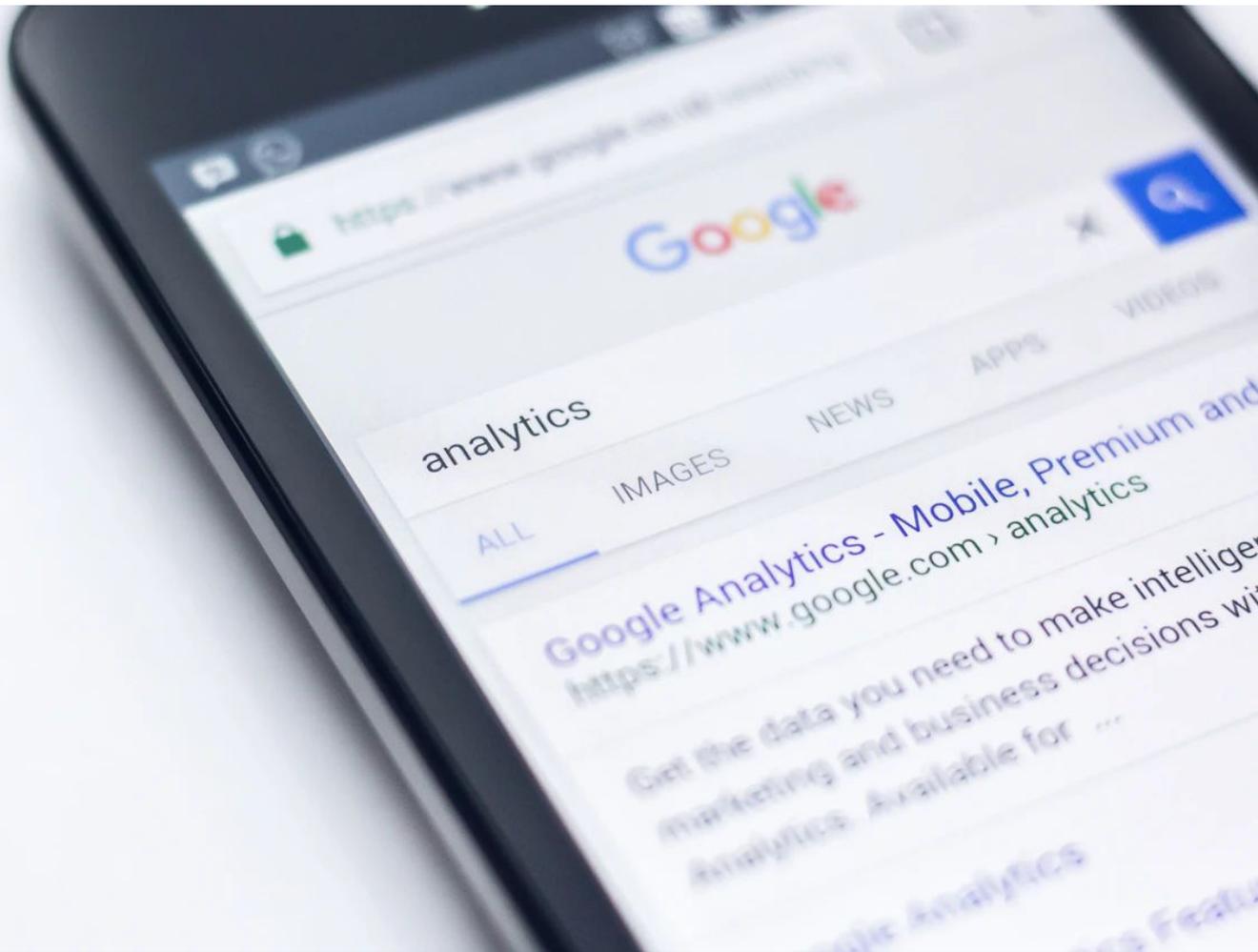


What are customers looking for?

EMBRACE REGULATION AND COMPETITION - PLAN INCLUSIONS

Promote an arena of competitiveness to cause market disruption. Telco companies can explore throwing in **deals and freebies** to cascade the **value for money message**.

The pandemic is still here and given the revert back to stricter quarantine measures, consumers are stuck in their homes – likely facing a screen, may it be a phone, computer, or a TV screen. Streaming services are becoming more of a staple in households and keep consumers busy and entertained. **Give consumers a choice by offering more streaming package promos** (e.g. menu type with a variety of options: Netflix vs. HBO GO) to new customers who are at the point of deciding which ISP they should get.



What are customers looking for?

ENDORSERS

Following SMART's move on having a Hollywood actor endorser, there were divided sentiments among residents. Brands do not have to get a foreign actor as an endorser, as some negative comments received by SMART were about having a foreign actor endorsing a local brand. **Local personas can work better.** Brands can tap multiple personalities across their campaigns and do not have to stick to just one throughout an entire period. **Messaging and creativity** of the promotion are vital points to be considered. The public now craves more **organic promotions/marketing efforts over traditional ones**, which will help appeal to the younger generations.

MARKETING (the use of memes, anime, and comic strips)

As the public wanting more organic efforts, there is a recurring trend with brands (e.g. Minute Burger) that uses memes, anime, and comic strips as formats of their posts on their Facebook page. Feedback mainly was netizens giving praise to the brand's marketing team for being less formal with their strategy.



What our Insights leaders say



Kate Dudang, Insights Manager, Philippines

“Having a data-driven approach in finding out what competitors or the industry as a whole has been doing will help brands close in performance gaps and identify key areas they can work on to boost their growth. Trendspotting reports such as this aim to encourage brands to look outside of their business and understand the industry better so they can formulate informed strategies and come up with relevant initiatives.”

Victoria Lazo, Insights Manager, Philippines

“Since the pandemic, telco companies have had to step up their game. In the Philippines, they were directed by the President himself to amp up their services. This report looks into conversations on the top telco industry players and dabbles on one of the newer ones who raked in hundreds of thousands of buzz in a single month. Trendspotting reports like this can be leveraged by companies to harvest and pinpoint relevant insights and themes from organic conversations about their services and industry.”



Francis Calucin, Insights Analyst, Philippines

“Internet access has been and will continue to be a basic necessity in every household. But, from the perspective of many, these internet service providers are struggling to consistently satisfy its customers needs. From sluggish connection speed to poor customer service, a lot are voicing out their complaints publicly where everyone can see the quality of service that they provide. This trendspotting report addresses the solutions to these certain problems. Backed up by statistics, insights and solutions provided in these reports can help companies formulate solutions and use this as a basis for further reforms.”





Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us for more information on this whitepaper.

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