

**Shifting from Egyptian arranged  
marriage to cyber marriage:  
a female perspective on new  
matchmaking media technology**



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**Abstract:**

The idea of arranged marriage is subject to various pressures; for example, the diminishing of social networks, high aggregate complexity in the choice of a marital partner, and finding a new life agreement of such services that are increasingly replacing and penetrating other commercial matchmaking media. Websites and applications that match and connect individuals for marriage purposes are commonly used in the Western world; the use of internet-mediated services itself becomes a verified means undertaking the mainstream one. However, there have not been many previous investigations focusing on Egyptians and their usage of these apps. This paper aimed to report the methods and findings of interviews with 15 Egyptian females with same demographics and backgrounds, the results indicated that females in Egypt are not supporting the idea of cyber matchmaking. Despite the advantages associated with cyber matchmaking, they expressed high risks of online matchmaking that would definitely prevent the idea. In addition, the results confirmed vital concerns regarding cyber matchmaking and social inclusion and the cultural constrains related to the idea.

**Keywords:** Egyptian arranged marriage, cyber marriage, matchmaking media technology

**Introduction:**

Our personal and social lives are becoming more and more reliant on social media and mobile phones (Horrigan and Rainie, 2006). Scholars disagree regarding whether the new technologies increase or decrease the dedication and durability of our core relationships, internet skeptics are arguing if marriages and other committed relationships may be jeopardized by the comparatively greater possible partners, that are now accessible online (Slater 2013; Turkle 2015). Moreover, other Internet critics of the effect on social life identify the overabundance of choice of potential partners online as a likely source of relationship instability.

The way that couples meet has changed dramatically in the last few decades because of online dating (Rosenfeld et al., 2019). It is also changing who they marry, nearly a century ago. Bossard (1932) observed that married couples routinely met while living in the same neighborhood. Nowadays, more than one-third of marriages start online, a dramatic shift from previous trends (Cacioppo et al., 2013). As evidenced by current trends, couples are meeting through online dating and extending these relationships into the offline world, where the impressions they generate can have a lasting impact.

The primary goals of this study; to extend the cyber marriage literature beyond the relationship development by exploring the role of the social and physical culture in shaping the outcomes of relationships in marriage. Second, which, begs the question: Do people achieve long-term success using cyber to marriage? different rationalizations for these effects on marriage, based on the choice of the partner, and on the postulation that there is something different about online dating on relationships that plays a role in their success or failure leading to marriage. To answer this question, this paper will be reviewing the past literature on papers that focused on the usage of cyber marriage for individual differences between married people whose relationships start via online dating versus those who meet offline. Next, the paper will propose social exchange theory to explain the usage of cyber marriage. This paper will interview a sample of 15 Egyptian females with similar background, all of them

are single females willing to get married; the paper will conclude by discussing the theoretical and practical implications of our results.

### **Research Problem:**

Marriage will remain to be an important topic to discuss in Egypt. The new cyber world is treating almost every aspect of life differently. Does this contribute and shift the marriage part as well? With all the innovative media tools that emerge every day, will people shift from the mainstream arranged marriage to a cyber one?

### **Aim of Study:**

The aim of this paper to understand from a female perspective the effect of cyber matchmaking media technology on marriage in Egypt.

### **Literature Review:**

The purpose of marriage, which is a vow-binding ritual, is to formalize the relationship in accordance to the social, religious, and legal conventions (Justiatini et al, 2020). This method of searching for a companion evolved in the midst of significant social, demographic, and technological changes. Internet become a progressively vital part of many people lives; besides, it used as a method for everyday activities; for example, things as shopping, searching for information on new products and places, and numerous of other tasks (Horrigan and Rainie, 2006). Social media has predominantly altered the lives of many people; now people learn and connect (Jacobson et al., 2020). Social media has changed how people interact with one another and spend their time; they are interacting online more and more through websites, instant messaging, email, and other social media platforms that include text, video, and online photo albums (Jordan et al, 2013). In 2020, it was found that there are around 3.80 billion active users of social media globally, with an average of 8.3 social media accounts (Hootsuite, 2020). On the other hand, to unlock the true potential of social media, participation and interaction are integral antecedents. The benefits of social media participation are well documented with participation increasing perceived value from interactions and overall higher

levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty (McClure and Seock, 2020; Quach et al., 2020). Glassner (2010) argues that cyberspace, as being somehow innovative, is an attractive platform for speculative fears. McKenna et al, (2002) argue that the asynchronicity of computer-mediated communication produces conceivable relationship advantages. Online matchmaking requires users with a market platform where the participants' choice sets, and actual choices are emphasized to the researcher.

Over the past ten years, using online dating sites to find love partners has become a visible and popular method of choosing a relationship (Espinoza et al, 2008). As according to Galal (2004), many spousal Web sites used by Arab youths searching for marriage potential partners. It is logical that individuals may turn to the Internet to search for a partner; Sautter et al (2010) suggested that there are Three main factors have contributed to the rise in popularity of Internet dating: (1) technological advancements that have made it more accessible and efficient, along with rising computer literacy; (2) changes in the population that have increased the number and diversity of people who may be looking for love; and (3) social changes that have made Internet dating more acceptable. Newer technologies for meeting include phone applications, which have reputations for promoting hookups and short term relationships rather than committed relationships. Moreover, Fox et al (2005) stated that internet dating is in a rapid growth and this is due to the widespread of internet access, growing computer literacy, improved real-time chat programs, and digital cameras, since 1997, there has been a significant growth in both internet and its use. As a matter of fact, many people are now using social media to meet and connect with others and some of such connections have led to marital choice and marriage (Afolaranmi, 2022).

Historically, online dating services have assured users of greater results than traditional methods of meeting people (Finkel et al., 2012), Individuals who are meeting and getting married through internet dating might have particular traits that set them apart from the wider community. People who are married to someone they met online are probably younger than those who met their spouse

offline, as online dating is most common among 18 to 29-year-olds (Anderson et al., 2020). Sahib et al. (2006) interpreted with evidence that in-person meetings are essential to matchmaking as a partial authorization data included in the online profiles. Finkel et al. (2012) found that the dating pool is also widened by online dating. Internet dating websites should provide the greatest relationship advantage because Internet dating websites are dedicated to an efficient search for particular partner criteria (Finkel et al. 2012) in a way that provides, better matches and more rapid information gathering on matched partners; unlike Manning (2006 p.141) who confirmed that 68% of the divorce filed cases elaborated users meeting a new love over the internet. Recent evidence on the women who participate in cyber matchmaking marriage suggests that they are not all the stereotypical obedient feminine wife to be (Luehrmann, 2004; Schaeffer-Grabel, 2004).

According to Baker (2002), online relationships could be successful if people who first met in places based upon common interests, also if they did communicate on cyber for a long before meeting face to face; without too much intimacy. Completely, if they worked through to surpass the obstacles in order to become closer and negotiate any conflict in a fine way to stay together. Oppenheimer 1988 claims that the extent that mate matching is an information- gathering process, Iso through nternet dating with it advantage as a search technology, and its significantly rich and extensive database platform, it would aid in speeding up the shift from online dating to marriage commitment.

However, other researches discovered that couples who met online had higher breakup rates for romantic relationships—marital and non-marital—than couples who met through the mainstream techniques. It was discovered that important variables that predicted whether couples would stay together or end their relationship, this includeds relationship quality and duration; in addition to, the location of meetings. These observed trends are explained by evidence derived from theory and prior research (Paul, A. 2014). There are plenty of alternative online dating methods, such gaming and chat, are serendipitous and



would lack the maximized choice set or potential informational advantage of online dating. According to Finkel et al (2012), people who are more interested in finding a committed spouse online may also choose might self-select into the Internet dating market.

### **Theoretical Framework:**

Theoretical paradigms provide an interpretative framework for research in a way that best supports the aim of the study. Cohen et al. (2007) emphasised the role of theory in research as being vital. Despite its name social exchange theory is a general theoretical model that extends on many disciplines of social sciences (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Social exchange theory is based on the idea of give and take, if this back-and-forth relationship is not contemplated effortlessly, it will unquestionably alter the relationship health (Deausealt and Walbridge, 2021). According to Homans (1958), social exchange theory claims that human relationships and choices are affected by cost-benefit analyses; for example, the rewards from being in a relationship outweigh the social and personal costs.

It is extensively recognized that any related privacy issues are mostly situational, and deeply purpose dependent, and disclosed information context (Malhotra et al., 2004). The contexts of online social networking vary from ones that are precisely formalized and regulated to others that are mainly based on social and mutual trust of the interacting participants; both situations are recognizable within the scope of Social Exchange Theory, which defines them as negotiated and mutual types of social exchange. Social exchange theory proposes that social behavior is the result of an exchange process. The purpose of this exchange is to maximize benefits and minimize costs. Online social networks seem to be an ideal platform for social exchange because they provide an opportunity to keep social relations with a relatively low cost compared to offline relations (Surma, 2015).

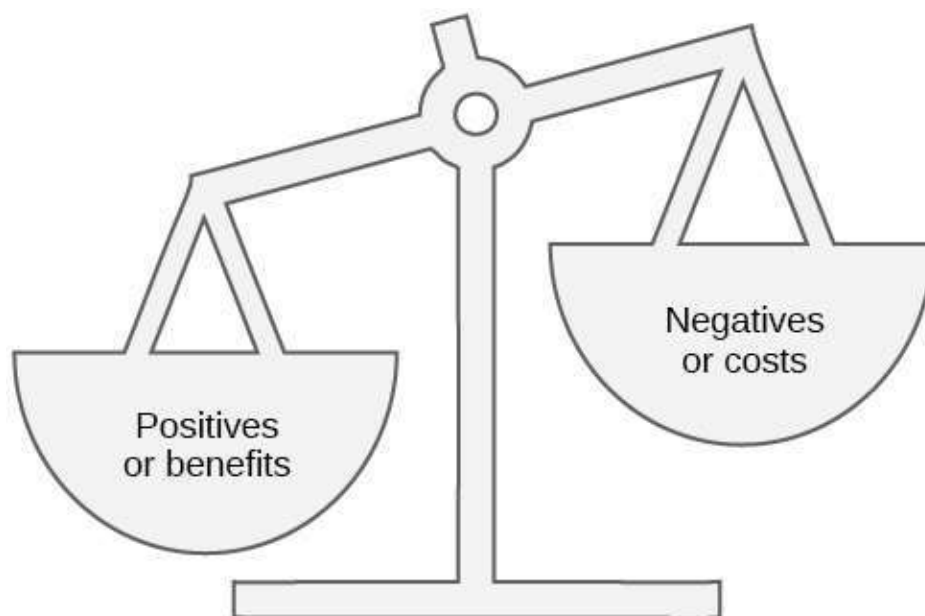


Figure 1: Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003

In cyber, trust is assumed on the idea that other consumers will act positively and reliably; also, it is relied on personality and organizational behaviors (Shareef et al., 2020). Trust has also been proved to be a main element of social exchange theory and is an integral component of social exchange and media relationship (Gharib et al., 2017; Luo, 2002). Social exchange theory discussed why people form relationships, what do attract people to each others, and different types of love. Furthermore, the social exchange theory determined why people are satisfied and stay in a relationship. According so social exchange theory, people act as naïve thinkers in keeping a ratio record tally of costs and benefits of forming and maintaining a relationship with others (Figure 1) (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003).

It is always that people are motivated to maximize their benefits of social exchanges, or relationships, and minimize the costs. People prefer to have more benefits than costs, or to have nearly equal costs and benefits, but most people are dissatisfied if their social exchanges create more costs than benefits. If a person has ever decided to commit to a romantic relationship, he/she will probably consider all the advantages and disadvantages of his/her decision; such as, the benefits of being in a committed romantic relationship; having a



companionship, intimacy, and passion, also being comfortable with a person you know well. Nevertheless, the costs of being in a committed romantic relationship, boredom from being with only one person may set in; it might be expensive to share activities such as attending movies and going to dinner. As a result, a person then will calculate whether to continue the relationship or not.

### **Research Questions:**

The study employed Social Exchange Theory to examine the the effect of cyber matchmaking media technology on marriage in Egypt. The research questions hereby examine the variables set using the theory:

1. Does cyber matchmaking play a significant role in matchmaking?
2. What are the female perceptions on cyber matchmaking?
3. Does cyber matchmaking has a relationship with the quality of marriage?
4. What are the cultural constrains associated with cyber matchmaking?

### **Methodology:**

This study aims to understand from a female perspective the effect of cyber matchmaking media technology on marriage in Egypt; as a result, the study used a purposive sample of 15 Egyptian females, who were recruited based on specific characteristics with the same background. Data were collected using in-depth interviewing in order to achieve a rich description of female perspective on the effect of cyber matchmaking media technology on marriage in Egypt.

The paper used eligibility criteria specified in choosing the participants, the first clear aspect is the gender as the study focused on the female perspective. Second, the social class the age focused on certain social class which is the A one, to be able to reach a narrowed perspective. Third, the age aspect, as the paper would like to highlight the female perspective on a marriage topic, so the age chosen should for represent the common marriage age in Egypt 25-35; for choosing the participants were mainly the age range, to ensure that recent experiences with the cyber platforms were represented in the sample; in

addition, to the educational level, were the participants should have received a proper education. Finally, an important aspect, is the marital status, all females were single, unmarried divorced or widow, as all the entire population was drawn from within the same consistent criteria.

The interviews were semi-structured that lasted from 30-45 minutes based on the information intensity. Participants were free to skip questions if they wanted, besides they got to discontinue at any time. They all consented to record their interviews; these recordings were professionally transcribed and generated for data analysis

The interview guide consists of four parts as assorted in the research questions; the first part consists of questions intending to understand the role of cyber matchmaking in marriage. The second part aimed at clarifying the female perceptions on cyber matchmaking in Egypt; thirdly, understanding the relation between cyber matchmaking and the quality of marriage. Finally, the last questions are analyzing the cultural constrains associated with cyber matchmaking in Egypt.

### **Results:**

In-depth interviews were conducted with 15 female participants; the interviews with the participants are whose responses are collected, analyzed, and compared. The data collection period lasted between 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> November 2023. The questions intended to answer the above mentioned research questions; underneath are the most significant results of the research questions;

The participants were asked if they ever used ‘cyber’ matchmaking form, most of the answers were rejecting the usage any form on cyber matchmaking, F4: No, I don’t see it a source that I can trust, and I hear lots of stories that people use it for different intentions and having fun. However, two females mentioned that they used cyber matchmaking before but only for fun and curiosity. F1: Yes, out of fun, I was living alone in a new country and I wanted to explore. F5: Yes, out of curiosity nothing more. Furthermore, even when

participants were asked if they are willing to use, the most common answers were negative as well. F6: No, I believe I very easy way of manipulating, I'd rather meet someone in person to get to know the personality more. I also believe that in our culture, it's perceived as an "inappropriate" way of getting to know people. F8: added that 'If a dating app, then I don't think I would. Because I wouldn't feel safe. However, I wouldn't mind if it's on social media, having mutual friends.' F5: no don't believe I will find my match.

When participants were asked if 'cyber' matchmaking play an important role in marriage in Egypt? They were doubtful, confirming a moderate role in the society, they replied, F2: I'm not sure because i'm don't get exposed to it that often, F15: No not on a large scale. Also, F11 added: I think only if the person seeking a relationship isn't a very sociable person and doesn't find it easy to get to know new people, the internet makes communicating easier. Only two participants were too positive about the role of cyber matchmaking Egypt, they mentioned F4: yes, because many people in Egypt have acces to the internet and are looking to meet new people and get married Surprisingly; besides, F7: yes, I actually know several couples who made it through such apps and met several people using them. Moreover, when the population were asked if cyber matchmaking is satisfying an important need in Egypt, mostly replied that isn't satisfying a need, F1: Not that much, because males sometimes use it to meet females without being serious about marriage, F4: I think it has become a rather intriguing tool that many people are resorting to. They mainly try it out of curiosity or to fill in their free time.

Additionally, participants were asked to answer cyber' matchmaking has advantages versus the arranged mainstream one. Surprisingly participants listed many advantages such as; F3: I would say people find it more commitment-free like we talk and meet online with no pressure and without anyone being involved that could cause sensitivity. Besides F7: mentioned that the advantages of cyber matchmaking could be that they widen the opportunities to meet more people and have deep conversations before meeting in person. I see only one advantage of mainstream in my opinion,

which is that the families get to know each other earlier which could be a shortcut if there's anything that would ruin the marriage. Furthermore, F14: Families are not involved, no friends in common so no sensitivity, it matches people with similar interests. Yes, a participant F9 mentioned that 'Both are not good'.

*What are the opportunities and risks of 'cyber' matchmaking? A question that was answered by the participants, with not too many differences. F2 revealed:* I see that it has more risks than opportunities, however, I can only find the opportunity in it being free of sensitivity and time saving. I mean, if we clicked we can meet, so it saves time. For the risks, Talking to a stranger through a screen isn't the safest thing. People joins with different backgrounds and mindsets. I heard a story of someone who hacked a mobile through such apps. Also, I find it a way that could help or give more room for cheating. Besides, F10: people could actually meet someone they could love but also, they could be exposed to danger. F8: the risks definitely include social judgement. Opportunities would include the privacy the application provides. Finally, F14 stated: opportunities: it might help people who have closed circles to get to know to other and it might as well be more comforting for those who find it difficult to deal with people in person Risks: a person can get deceived easily, lack of human interpersonal connection, wrong perception about the person who resorts to this tool due to cultural beliefs. You can never know if this is a genuine person who really matches you in terms of social class, education, background, etc.

Participants were asked to mention the *factors to consider if using 'cyber' matchmaking, some of the factors mentioned was* F1: Safety and credibility, F5: Catfishing as a possibility, F8: Making sure the app/web is legit. Its important for me to make sure the person is verified. F11 said that common people is a must factor, F13: Privacy, fees, people on the app/tool. F15: Extra cautiousness while dealing with the people you find over these platforms. I think you also need to consider what are the ways you can use to

make sure that the information you're given about a person are precise and true.

Moving to the perception associated with cyber matchmaking, females mentioned that F2: That those kinds of relationships do not succeed, F7: A person not being serious, F4: that these applications are only created for short term relationships and wouldn't lead to anything serious. F5: Males are not serious about marriage; they're just getting to know new girls for entertainment. F12: Although some people might believe that it can widen a person's circle of connections, I think it's still perceived as a tool that someone only gets to spend their free time on rather than creating real relationships. Finally, an usual answer from F14: The user is looking for a hooker. On the other hand, participants were asked about their feelings towards the cyber matchmaking, they stated interesting answers; such as, F1: it's a bit new to the Egyptian traditions so it might be scary to some people, F4: Harder to keep up with talking to that many people vs the limited amount of people you meet face to face, F8: I feel the mainstream one is more secured and risk free as we are meeting through a person in an arranged setting. But, some people might find cyber matchmaking easier on them as they like to know more about about a person before they get to meet them. F10: Excitement curiosity nervousness. Conclusively, F2: The mainstream one is safer however might be less comfortable

Then, the audience were asked to answer if they think that couples who meet online are more likely to break up, F2: I've seen people who started their relationship online and they're still together, I guess that's because they talked and communicated more in depth that they understand each other more. F15: Not really, it depends on the person not on the channel of communication F3: I don't think so, depends on their circumstances. Other participants answered by F4: It's not related. Subsequently, females answered the question if they see any relation between cyber' matchmaking and love associated in the marriage. F6: No, it doesnt matter. We are all strangers at first. Love doesnt have a certain criteria. You just have to get to know the person really well.

F7: Yes, they chose to get married based on interests so most probably they loved each other. Lastly, F15: It doesn't matter how people meet, what matters is whether they are compatible.

Participants were asked to answer if they are you open to share your experience with family or friends if using a 'cyber' matchmaking form, F2 answered: Depends on which platform, if it's a dating app, I would be careful who I would share the experience with because some people are not open minded and they would judge due to our culture. However if on social media platforms I wouldn't mind. If the experience is getting to the point of a relationship, I would definitely let my family know regardless of which platform, F8 added: I guess yes, i won't use this step unless i truly believe in it so why not, F12: Maybe friends not much family, yet they reply of was F15: No.

The final question was How does the Egyptian society stigmatize the users of 'cyber' matchmaking? F2: Egyptians do not really like using cyber matchmaking for something serious as they get scared to be a victim of the communication process. However, westerners use it to get to know each other easily if they do not really have a social life or do not get the chance to meet people through any activity. Additionally, F10: I think its perceived as "inappropriate" and is still not being accepted in Egypt. I actually think that many people who resort to this tool themselves are well aware that this isn't the optimum tool of "matchmaking" but still resort to it. F4: Meeting a stranger, very bad choice, that the partner is usually looking for a fling that they could be a thief or a bad person. Finally, a straightforward answer was F7: Shameful.



### **Discussion and Analysis:**

This study was an overview on cyber matchmaking from females' perspective; generally, discussing the role, first part consists of questions intending to understand the role of cyber matchmaking in marriage. The second part aimed at clarifying the female perceptions on cyber matchmaking in Egypt; thirdly, understanding the relation between cyber matchmaking and the quality of marriage. Finally, the last questions are analyzing the cultural constrains associated with cyber matchmaking in Egypt.

They results confirmed that cyber matchmaking does not play a significant role on marriage in Egypt, as Homans (1961) confirmed that is social exchange is based on essential mutual reinforcement idea is derived from the kind. Most of the marriages in Egypt, as answered by the intended females, are through mainstream techniques. In addition, females emphasized that there is not significant role of using cyber matchmaking technology, mentioning that it is a very minimal need. Also, mostly, they have not used cyber matchmaking forms before, and they are not willing to use; if they only did use, will be only out of curiosity and fun.

Despite having much advantages and opportunities as mentioned by the participants, cyber matchmaking is entwined with negative perceptions as a tool. Females stated negative insights associated with females and males using cyber matchmaking technology, supporting Sales (2015), that innovative technologies for meeting online such as have reputations for promoting hookups and superficial relationships pretty much more than committed serious relationships. Participants did also emphasize that there are not substantial benefits from using cyber matchmaking technology comparing to its risks and disadvantages. This contradicts the idea of social exchange is to maximize benefits and minimize costs, which confirm that online social networks seem to be an ideal platform for social exchange because they provide an opportunity to keep social relations with a relatively low cost compared to offline relations (Surma, 2015).

Analysis of individual information revealed that meeting online is not associated with the quality of marriage; furthermore, meeting online is not also accompanying couple breakup, very less percentage agreed that it might happen, as it was initially superficial, which oppose Paul (2014) who revealed that the breakup rates for both romantic relationships was found to be higher for couples who met online than couples who met through offline venues; moreover, Manning (2006 p.141) reported from divorce lawyers, finding that “68% of the divorce cases involved couples were matchmade over the Internet. Meeting online was significantly associated with transitions to marriage. Consistent with Rosenfeld and Thomas (2012), confirming that meeting online had no relation on couple stability. If only, some mentioned that cyber matchmaking improves the quality of marriage as the couples understandably choose each other; besides, this form of marriage has limited or no family inference.

The study suggests that the data are more consistent with a positive or neutral association between cyber matchmaking and relationships than with a negative association between the Internet and romantic relationships. The results revealed that there are cultural constraints related to cyber matchmaking. Participants confirmed that they are uncomfortable sharing their cyber experience with their family and friends, which seems that they will not be proud getting to know people online. Also, they did confirm that the Egyptian society does stigmatize people who use such technology in a negative way.

**Conclusion:**

Cyber is a whole new world with its advantages and disadvantages. Marriage is an important commitment that will happen with/without the help of cyber. The new technology has aided in trying a new way to matchmaking. The paper aimed to explore effect of cyber matchmaking media technology on marriage in Egypt; also, the paper intended to focus from a female perspective.

This study employed the social exchange theory in order to understand the costs and benefits of cyber marriage, the purpose of this exchange is to maximize benefits and minimize costs. It is been apparent that the paper highlighted that people give up much if they used the cyber as a tool for marriage (cost), with limited advantages (according to the participants). online marriage actually fulfills the pillars of marriage, yet it needs much effort to be achieved rightfully.

Cyber marriage is a common mate selection strategy among the internet users that may continue to grow through more social networks. The paper focused on certain gender perspective with qualitative point of view. There are some limitations of this current research that should be mentioned; the number of sample are not enough due to the time constraints and scarcity of resources, so the results cannot be generalized on all Egyptian female, yet this study should be considered when examining marriage issues in Egypt, as it is an effective exploration to understand the phenomena from different female perspectives thoroughly. With this research suggesting considering further research with both gender males and females perspectives, with a quantitative approach on cyber marriage in Egypt. Correspondingly, focusing on certain cyber platform will give a specified point if view.

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