



Travellers' behavioral intentions depending on their beliefs: an empirical study

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is threefold: first is to study and analyse the personal beliefs of the customers regarding their generic assessments for the main issues of today: environment, culture or equal opportunities for everyone. Second, it will attempt to compare the differing opinions different customers from several countries possess. Finally, it is to relate, link and model the influence these opinions may have on the country selection made by the tourist.

Design/methodology/approach – Evidence is drawn from a sample of approximately 1,600 customers/tourists who visited Crete island. Those in the sample were from ten different countries of origin. The research attempts to shed some light on the importance of travellers' beliefs by using the multinomial logistic model that tested whether it can produce results for prediction and comparisons.

Findings – Results suggest that tourist beliefs can be categorized in three factors, namely country's characteristics, tradition and hygiene that are differentiated among nationality groups. No robust support is provided for any relationship between travellers' values and country selection and thus arguing for further research in tourism marketing and policy.

Practical implications – By using the findings of this work, hotel managers and tour operators can identify the multicultural diversity of international tourists.

Originality/value – This work addresses the ways with which customers by using their personal beliefs select destinations (countries). It diverts from the mainstream relevant literature that focuses almost solely on the level of satisfaction or the level of service the customer enjoys. One of the issues that remains rather neglected is the importance that personal characteristics and attributes of the tourist/customer influence the final decision on where to spend his/her holidays.

Keywords Personal beliefs, Values, Tourism marketing, Greece

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Tourism is been considered as the economic engine either for the developed or the developing economies worldwide. The early growth of tourism was based in that the new economically empowered middle class adopted the same patterns of travel that had previously been developed by the aristocratic classes (Baum, 1996; Kandampully, 2000). Other factors such as the technological growth and the dramatic change in demographic characteristics transform tourism in one of the fastest growing sectors of economic activity. In this competitive global environment, customers are provided with a plethora of offerings to make them choose a certain vacation destination or hotel/accommodation. Cultural characteristics as well as other factors such as socio-demographic variations have created a change in tourists' values (Hall and Weiler, 1992), as tourists – travellers prefer to participate, learn and experience the place they visit (Pearce, 1988). For example, in a research paper, Reisinger and Turner (1999), analysed the cultural differences between Japanese tourists and Western societies and stated that a major factor influencing Japanese evaluation on Australian services in tourism industry might



be the cultural differences between them. They supported that Japanese culture avoid conflicts and competition in order to preserve social harmony, unlike Western countries, who sustain their economy on competition.

What seems rather neglected in the tourism marketing theory is the other side of the equation, the one that focuses on the identification and satisfaction of the needs of a diverse public. These customers/tourists' needs that are emanating from everyone's personal values, beliefs and condition are conceptually relevant and related to the inherent role of marketing and they are later transformed to selection criteria.

This paper adopts a different approach from similar works earlier presented to identify customers' selection criteria. It attempts to deviate from the traditional notion of tourism and hotel marketing by investigating the rationale behind customer selection for the destination country in which s/he will spend his/her holidays (Gyimóthy, 2000). Beliefs and values will be examined and related to the final choice for groups of customers of different nationalities. The rest of the study is organized as follows: the first part presents a brief outline of the customers' selection criteria and the background theory required. The second part introduces the hypotheses relevant to this study. The third part presents the analysis of the dimensions identified regarding tourists overall assessments for "hot" issues of today and compares these different views for the various origins' customers. Next, the results are reported and discussed and implications follow.

Personal values and behaviours

Consumers make their choices according to their personal values (environmental or cultural) or, in other words their enduring beliefs regarding a specific mode of conduct or end state that is preferred to the opposite or converse mode (Rodríguez *et al.*, 2012). Personal values play an important role in consumers' behaviour (Scott and Lamont, 1977), and affect consumption and consumers' attitudes (Donthu and Cherian, 1994; Prakash and Munson, 1985; Valencia, 1989). They also greatly influence the selection of service or a product, while simultaneously regulating the manner in which this selection takes place (Vinson *et al.*, 1977). It is generally supported that there are two ways on how personal values affect consumer behaviour in selection procedure. On one hand, Kahle (1980), argues that personal values have an indirect effect on consumer behaviour through their influence on less important factors such as domain specific attitudes. On the other hand other researchers argue in favour of a direct relationship between personal values and consumers behaviour, either strong (Williams, 1979; Carman, 1977; Homer and Kahle, 1988) or weak (Pitts and Woodside, 1983). Especially in the tourism sector personal values lead to different holiday expectations and experiences and to a different degree of satisfaction (Reisinger and Turner, 1999).

Cultural variations or/and differing values of the customers/tourists may affect their beliefs of the service expected and form their perceptions for the nature of the tourism product as an experience of place (location and people) at a particular time. Reisinger and Turner (1999) have proved that ethics and social behaviour which form the country image affect directly tourists holidays experience. They have also highlighted that the hosts' country ability to understand culturally differences have an effect on positive tourists' satisfaction. Country image include stereotypes held about a country's economic, political and cultural environment (Ahmed and Johnson, 2001).

When consumers seek destinations, the degree of their familiarity with the service provided, guide their beliefs and considerably affect their evaluations: when unfamiliar

with the service provided, country image may serve as an advantage by which tourists make a selection (Liang, 2012; Roth and Romeo, 1992; Tse and Gorn, 1993). On the other hand when consumers or travellers are knowledgeable about service provided, country image play a less important role in forming their attitudes (Ahmed and Johnson, 2001).

Personal values and selection procedure

Relative literature supports that hospitality customers base their purchase decisions on factors such as price, value, (Ingram and Daskalakis, 1999) service quality, service delivery, total quality management and service production (Ingelsson *et al.*, 2012; Green, 2012). All these factors have been increasingly identified as key differentiators and critical elements in building and maintaining a competitive advantage and increased customer satisfaction especially in tourism (O'Neill and McKenna, 1994; Koc, 2003, 2004; Hudson *et al.*, 2004; Moutinho *et al.*, 2012). Satisfied customers lead to repeat custom, personal recommendations and a favourable image. A research into hotel selection criteria has focused on the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality and facilities. Most travellers consider the following hotel attributes when making a hotel choice decision: cleanliness, location, service quality and reputation of the hotel (Atkinson, 1988; Burton, 1990).

According to Reisinger and Turner (1999), the traditional consumer behaviour model consists of three different stages: the first pre-purchase stage, or stage of recognition, in which consumer search for information and select an option, the second consumption stage, in which buyer identifies and evaluates the delivered benefits from the service provider and the last stage of post-consumption in which consumer compares the service benefits to his/her expectations. However, this model seems to ignore the influence of values (cultural or environmental) on the purchase experience as cultural values lead to different stages of satisfaction.

Nowadays, the concern for ethical issues-such as environmental and social concerns-and national culture (Frias *et al.*, 2012; Shaw *et al.*, 2000) as well as their effect on tourist behaviour knows an important growth. This dramatic increase in environmental awareness over recent decades resulted, a different kind of consumerism, more environmental, more social responsible (Brown, 1992; Peattie, 1992; Font *et al.*, 2012).

As many destinations offer rather similar products like luxury hotels, convenience transportation, attractions or professional services a major factor influencing travellers to select a country for vacations might be the cultural proximity between home country and vacation destination. As early as 1985 in a research paper Turcq and Usunier (1985) supported that Japanese are extremely demanding on services and they have higher service expectations than other tourists. This could be supported as Japanese according to their cultural beliefs had a different philosophy on how the service should be properly performed. Moreover, Ahmed and Krohn (1992), in the same line of research, identified ten major factors of Japanese tourists' behaviour when selecting USA destinations among them: belongingness (travelling in groups and seeking comfort in togetherness), family influence (purchasing gifts for close friends and family members and reciprocating), hierarchical acknowledgement (behaving in accordance to social status), the concept of kinen (collecting evidence of travel to prestigious tourist destinations) and tourist photography (importance of photography).

In another study, Reisinger and Turner (1999), supported that cultural values play an important role in buyer behaviour and identified five cultural dimensions (courtesy,

competence, interaction, idealism and communication) as factors influencing selection procedure of a vacation country. Hoon (1992), proved that cross-cultural differences form beliefs and expectations of the level of quality and satisfaction provided by hotel facilities, while Bauer *et al.* (1993) argue in favour of the differences between Asian and non-Asian travellers in relation to their demand for a wide range of hotel facilities and services.

Hypotheses and research questions

Tourism is one of the most important sectors of the world's service economy, with the global tourists arrivals ranging from 657 million (2000) to reach the 1,600 million by the year 2020. In the global tourism market place a country is usually linked with a unique tourism product or destination. For example, Austria is linked with mountains, Egypt with cultural and historic tourism, Mediterranean countries with seaside tourism and Greece with historic, cultural, seaside and sun tourism.

The drastic increase in environmental awareness, ethics and social concerns over recent years resulted in the emergence of "green" or "ethical" consumerism (Brown, 1992; Gimenez-Espin *et al.*, 2012). However, there is evidence arguing that consumer concerns are broader than that including animal issues, irresponsible selling and oppressive regimes (Judith and Jago, 2010). Arguably more effort is therefore required on the part of the consumer in the decision-making process for the country selection. Tourist's – traveller's choice on a vacation destination relies not only on hotel's price, luxury, convenience and service but also depends on his/her image of that destination (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Chon, 1991; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989; Koc, 2007). Other factors affecting tourists' choice may be the climate, the culture, heritage, or the man-made elements (Dritsakis, 1995; Seddighi *et al.*, 2001; Seddighi and Theocharous, 2002). Nebenzahl and Jaffe (1997) in their research paper measured the effect of country image on consumer evaluation, and proved that country's values affects' directly customers' perceived value of a product. Country image maybe count the same in total product's or service image, such as price and brand name (Eroglu and Machleit, 1989). In another research, Ilbery and Kneafsey (1998), stated that country image provide a certain characteristic to customers as making reference to socially constructed concepts such as "authentic", "healthy", "traditional".

Reisinger and Turner (1999), affirm that personal beliefs of consumers have direct impact on tourists' behaviour and on tourists' experiences. Cultural differences and social behavior differentiate personal tourist values or beliefs and discriminate the experiences and the levels of their satisfaction (Argyle *et al.*, 1986). Hofstede (1980) confirms that Western and Eastern societies have many differences on their expectation from a service. He also supported those certain dissimilarities on customers' perceptions evaluations from the service stand and within cultures and/or nationalities. Hofstede's study identified five cultural dimensions, power distance, individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity-femininity and long versus short-term orientation. Using Hofstede's case study Kolman *et al.* (2003), proved that there are cultural differences between Central and Western European countries and stated that these differences may influence the outcomes of processes of politico-economic integration. Choi and Chu (2000), in an exploratory study identify cultural differences between Eastern and Western countries in relation with the hotel facilities and proved that value is the most influential factor in relation to Eastern travellers, whereas service quality is the most important for Western tourists.

All the above considered may form our set of hypotheses as follows:

- H1. Tourists personal beliefs and values are better described from a multi-dimensional construct.
- H2. Different people from different nationalities differently assess these values.
- H3. According to their personal values customers may select the destination vacation country.

The sample

The analysis detailed in this paper was conducted on data gathered from a sample consisted of 1,544 customers/tourists visited Crete belonging to ten different countries-of-origin using personal interviews. Almost all of the respondents were randomly contacted inside their hotel accommodation (four or five stars) in Heraclion, Chania and Rethymno cities. Respondents came from countries Austria, Belgium, Germany, East Europe (Russia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus), England, France, Japan, Nederland, Mediterranean European (Spain, Italy), Scandinavian countries (Switzerland, Norway, Finland), USA-Australia and others (including Greece, Israel, Cyprus).

In regard to the measurement of the variables, information was obtained through the use of a specially developed questionnaire part of which was used in the present analysis. Questionnaires were checked to exclude obvious incompleteness or extreme answers. Three groups of questions are designed to elicit behavioural beliefs (values) of the tourists asked, their indented and revealed choice for the place of vacation, and their socio-demographics. The outcome evaluation measure employed a “totally unimportant” (1) to “absolutely important” (7) Likert scale in accordance to similar works. Results of the respondents regarding their Nationality, age and gender and tour operator are presented in Tables I-III.

Data analysis

Reliability

To assess the cultural values of customers – tourists the reliability of the introduced instrument has to be calculated first. The reliability estimate (Cronbach’s α measures) for the second set of questions exploring values (12 items) was found very high (0.819) verifying the very good scaling of the instrument.

These high values in alphas coefficients demonstrate the good internal consistency of the model and that they have acceptable reliability values in their original form. However, it was also checked whether the removal of any of the items may led to a significant improvement of the alphas but no such item was found. For this reason all the items were kept in the analysis.

Validity

The face validity of the construct is ensured due to the literature survey, analysis and the subsequent selection of the items of the instrument. In this way it appears that the instrument presents face and content validity. Further, in the conducted factor analysis almost all items load as expected to the factors thereby demonstrating a strong convergent validity. Further all items’ variance extracted scores exceed the cut-off point of 0.5 providing support for convergent validity of the construct (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

	Frequency	%
<i>Nationality</i>		
Austrian	85	5.2
Belgian	126	7.7
East Europe	50	3.0
UK	211	12.9
French	164	10.0
German	561	34.2
Japanese FE	20	1.2
Nederland	111	6.8
Other	76	4.6
Other European	84	5.1
Scandinavian	98	6.0
USA-Australia	54	3.3
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	788	48.0
Female	835	50.9
<i>Age</i>		
0-25	134	8.2
25-34	397	24.2
35-44	401	24.5
45-54	367	22.4
55-64	240	14.6
65 +	93	5.7

Travellers' behavioral intentions

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Table I.
Socio-demographic characteristics

	TUI	Neckerman	Thomas Cook	Fram	Other
Austrian	21	22	14	0	25
Belgian	64	30	17	2	11
East Europe	5	4	5	0	26
UK	48	13	43	6	76
French	22	7	13	66	47
German	197	170	53	13	103
Japanese FE	5	0	0	0	14
Nederland	42	29	9	3	27
Other	16	11	7	1	35
Other European	14	16	3	5	37
Scandinavian	28	3	4	2	53
USA-Australia	4	3	5	0	31

Table II.
Selection of tour operator according to nationality

	Greece	Spain	Malta	Cyprus	Turkey	Other
Yes	328	266	85	104	124	206
No	100	132	27	31	58	125

Table III.
If you had not visited Crete in which other place it would be more likely to go?

Dimensions of personal values

In order to find the interrelationships between items and to verify the hypothesis for the different aspects (dimensions) of personal values we performed factor analysis using the remaining from the reliability 12 items. A principal components was used to extract the factors and a varimax rotation to improve the interpretation.

Table IV presents the factor loadings as extracted. Loadings lower than 0.40 in absolute value have been suppressed to improve the clarity of Table IV. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin statistic was very high 0.846 indicating the existence of strong relationships among items. Finally, three factors, explaining the 54.069 per cent (Table IV) of the total variance, are obtained and thus the *H1* introducing a three dimensions of personal values.

The PCA revealed that a three factors structure explains the 54.069 per cent of the total variation within the data set and confirms the multidimensionality of personal customer values. The observed three factors include:

- (1) *Country characteristics*. With items such as political system, equal opportunities, environmental protection, recycling policies, cost of living, consist the first factor of tourists' values.
- (2) *Tradition and history*. With items such as culture, history, tradition food, consists the second factor influencing consumers – tourist behaviour.
- (3) *Health and hygiene system*. With items such as health system and hygiene conditions in vacations consists the third factor influencing consumers – tourist behaviour in country selection procedure.

Differences between different cultures

In order to verify the *H2* we performed an analysis of variance test (ANOVA) to identify the differences between the several populations we perform. ANOVA is a way of comparing the ratio of systematic variance to unsystematic variance in an experimental study. We use as dependent variables the three factor scores of the

	Components		
	1	2	3
The power and water saving is something that ...	0.744		
Equal opportunities policies in the country that I am travelling is something that ...	0.702		
The regime/political system of the country that I am travelling is something that ...	0.677		
Environmental protection is something that ...	0.646		
Recycling policies is something that ...	0.604		
The "cost of living" in the country that I am travelling is something that ...	0.422		
The tradition and the culture of the country that I am travelling ...		0.765	
To taste traditional food is something that ...		0.755	
The history of the country that I am travelling is something that ...		0.713	
The health system of the country I am travelling ...			0.830
The hygiene conditions and the cleanliness of the country I am travelling ...			0.767
The ability to keep fit when on vacation is something that ...			0.476
Eigenvalues	4.126	1.244	1.118
Variance explained (%)	34.381	10.369	9.320

Table IV.
Initial three factors
rotated solution

extracted factors and as a grouping variable the 12 different populations. Table V presents the ANOVA test and taking into account the last column of the table we could say that there is a significant effect of nationalities on personal values.

Analysing the *post hoc* table, using the Tukey HSD test, we identify certain differences between the different nationalities. Tables VI-VIII, present the differences between the personal values and the 12 different nationalities.

Selection procedure as function of the factors

In order to verify the *H3* that travellers choose a destination according to their personal beliefs we perform a correlation between the three extracted factors and their response in the question "If Crete was their first choice?". Results from the test prove that there is no relation between customers personal beliefs and the place they usually choose for vacation. Table IX presents the results of the Pearson correlation coefficient.

Taking into account the categorical nature of the responses, multinomial logistic regression was selected and applied, in order to identify if there are differences between

	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig.
<i>Country image</i>					
Between groups	48.549	11	4.414	4.537	0.000
Within groups	1,344.451	1,382	0.973		
Total	1,393.000	1,393			
<i>Tradition and history</i>					
Between groups	63.618	11	5.783	6.012	0.000
Within groups	1,329.382	1,382	0.962		
Total	1,393.000	1,393			
<i>Health and hygiene system</i>					
Between groups	35.836	11	3.258	3.317	0.000
Within groups	1,357.164	1,382	0.982		
Total	1,393.000	1,393			

Table V.
ANOVA analysis

	Austr	Belg	E E	UK	French	German	Jap	Nederl	Other	Other E	Scand	USA-Au
Austr	–											
Belg		–		*		*					*	
E E			–			*						
UK		*		–								
French					–							
German		*	*			–						
Japan							–					
Nederl								–				
Other									–			
Other E										–		
Scand		*									–	
USA-Au												–

Notes: *Statistical difference; Austr – Austrians; UK – United Kingdom; Japan – Japanese; Other E – Other Europeans; Belg – Belgians; French – French; Nederl – Nederland; Scand – Scandinavians; E E – East Europeans; German – Germans; Other – Others; USA-Au – USA-Australians

Table VI.
Differences between the nationalities according to country's characteristics

	Austr	Belg	E E	UK	French	German	Jap	Nederl	Other	Other E	Scand	USA-Au
Austr	-							*				
Belg		-						*				*
E E			-					*				
UK				-				*				
French					-			*				*
German						-		*				*
Japan							-					
Nederl	*	*	*	*	*	*		-	*	*		*
Other								*	-			
Other E								*		-		
Scand								*			-	*
USA-Au		*			*	*		*			*	-

Table VII.

Differences between the nationalities according to tradition/history

Notes: *Statistical difference; Austr – Austrians; UK – United Kingdom; Japan – Japanese; Other E – Other Europeans; Belg – Belgians; French – French; Nederl – Nederland; Scand – Scandinavians; E E – East Europeans; German – Germans; Other – Others; USA-Au – USA-Australians

	Austr	Belg	E E	UK	French	German	Jap	Nederl	Other	Other.E	Scand	USA-Au
Austr	-											
Belg		-	*	*								*
E E		*	-									
UK		*		-								
French					-							
German						-						
Japan							-					
Nederl								-				
Other									-			
Other E										-		
Scand		*									-	
USA-Au												-

Table VIII.

Differences between the nationalities according to hygiene factor

Notes: *Statistical difference; Austr – Austrians; UK – United Kingdom; Japan – Japanese; Other E – Other Europeans; Belg – Belgians; French – French; Nederl – Nederland; Scand – Scandinavians; E E – East Europeans; German – Germans; Other – Others USA-Au – USA-Australians

the customers – travellers personal beliefs and their vacation destination. Tung (1985) and Kleinbaum (1994), stated that multinomial logistic regression is highly recommended when the dependent and the independent variables are a mixture of qualitative and quantitative variables.

Results from the multinomial logistic regression analysis testify that the multinomial procedure could not verify the *H3* and convinced the Pearson correlation coefficient, that there is not exists a relation between personal beliefs and vacation destination. Table X presents the results from the multinomial procedure.

The large values of the log-likelihood statistics indicate poorly fitting of the statistical model as the larger the value of the log-likelihood, the more unexplained observations there are. Moreover, the small value of *R* indicates that it contributes

	Was Crete your first choice	Three extracted factors	Travellers' behavioral intentions
<i>Was Crete your first choice</i>			
Pearson coefficient	1	-0.031	
Sig. (two-tailed)		0.249	
<i>n</i>	1,632	1,389	
<i>Country characteristics</i>			
Pearson coefficient	-0.031	1	
Sig. (two-tailed)	0.249		
<i>n</i>	1,389	1,394	
<i>Was Crete your first choice</i>			
Pearson coefficient	1	-0.053*	
Sig. (two-tailed)		0.048	
<i>n</i>	1,632	1,389	
<i>Tradition and history</i>			
Pearson coefficient	-0.053*	1	
Sig. (two-tailed)	0.48		
<i>n</i>	1,389	1,394	
<i>Was Crete your first choice</i>			
Pearson coefficient	1	-0.046	
Sig. (two-tailed)		0.089	
<i>n</i>	1,394	1,389	
<i>Health and hygiene</i>			
Pearson coefficient	-0.046	1	
Sig. (two-tailed)	0.089		
<i>n</i>	1,389	1,394	

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Table IX.
Results from the correlation between customers' personal beliefs and vacation destination

	R^2 (Nagelkerke)	-2 log likelihood	Table X. Results from the multinomial logistic regression test
Crete first choice vs personal beliefs	0.008	1,634.999	
Other destination except Crete vs personal beliefs	0.033	4,466.657	

only a small amount to the model. Hence, the multinomial analysis procedure could not predict differences between travellers' personal values and vacation destination.

Conclusions

The growth of tourism worldwide has had a major impact on the world economy. The demand for mass tourism worldwide, has shown signs of sluggishness and the market is increasingly competitive, while the tourists appears to be more discriminating, seeking out alternative experiences as new cultural civilizations and new places to visit. The revolting idea of this paper attempted to move away from traditional approaches arguing for the benefit of incorporating personal beliefs and values in the country's selection process this conceptual structure identified non significant influence in this selection. This paradox, partially explained because of the lack of proper communication of messages about the characteristics and the reality of the environment of the destination country requires explicit discussion by the tourism industry. Why the customer, albeit interested in marketing ethics when consuming in home country, seems totally uninterested on the situation of the destination country? Are hedonic and

self-interested outcomes evaluated more than societal centred viewpoints of the tourists? Arguably, the tourism product has a number of characteristics evolving over time and a high volatility to world events. The tourist/customer inherently perceives vacations as a non-stressful state and attempts not to seek for information regarding the characteristics of the destination country. Supplementary to this the tour operators do not provide the relevant information for not losing potential customers. On the other hand analysis presented resulted in the identification of a three factorial model of values representing country's characteristics, tradition and history and health and hygiene conditions as important to the customer. In addition certain cultural differences have been identified for every nationality indicating for example that travellers came from Nederland are not so interested about the tradition and the history of the vacation country that they usually select or that Americans and Australians are more sensitive about the history of the visited country from Germans and French. Moreover, Belgians care more about the health system and the hygiene conditions than UK natives or Scandinavians.

Following the above analysis, where does tourism go from here? A distinct opportunity appears for tourist organizations and tour operators realizing this shift in customers' minds. In business terms it seems important to capitalize on those ethical concerns and different behaviors. Perhaps tourists in the near future will behave in the same sophisticated and sensitive manner when selecting holidays as when consuming products or services in their home country. Messages like "look over the environment", "respect country's heritage", "join the locals" or "boycott the country's regime" may become valuable ploys in changing attributes for both: people and governments forcing large tour operators not to solely concern about market share and profits but providing a "quality" holiday as well. A new approach to tourism marketing, focusing on striving ethical issues and behaviours should be seriously discussed and debated in the future.

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