E3S Web of Conferences **402**, 02010 (2023)
TransSiberia 2023
https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202340202010

The importance of digital marketing in the strategic management of aviation

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Abstract. Aviation plays an important role in the transportation sector, which expresses the process of transferring people from one place to another. In the aviation sector, which expresses the fact that people fly with the aircraft they have produced, the path or all the methods applied by the enterprises in order to reach their predetermined goals expresses the strategy here. Today, where the consumer carries out all their activities in the digital space, which is a virtual environment, digital marketing emerges as an area that businesses focus on within the framework of efficiency and sustainability. The main purpose of this research is to determine the importance of the digital marketing process in the realization of the targeted strategies of the airline companies operating in Istanbul. In this direction, digital marketing and strategic management scales were used in the study. Obtained data were analyzed with SPSS analysis system and evaluations were made as a result of Anova and t inverses. As a result of the research, it was revealed that there is a significant relationship between the digital marketing methods of the participants and the aviation strategic management of the enterprise. It has been revealed that there is no significant difference in terms of gender, age and educational status from environmental demographic variables.

1 Strategic management of aviation

In light of current advancements in business practices, companies have been establishing objectives for their future growth. Despite fluctuations in the economy, it is apparent that businesses are actively devising and executing strategies to maintain their longevity. To guarantee progress in this field, it may be beneficial for businesses to consider implementing innovative management systems and tools. The aviation sector operates in a highly competitive environment where entry and exit are not constant, environmental uncertainties are prevalent, and technological advancements are abundant. It would be greatly beneficial if those in charge of managing this field could kindly take into account all factors that may affect their businesses by thoroughly analyzing them. In the aviation industry, which falls under the service sector, it would be wise to prioritize the growing needs and expectations of customers when devising strategies. For businesses catering to the same consumer base, it may be beneficial to consider offering low-cost sales or differentiated services at a premium price point. It would be beneficial for them to consider various factors, such as market

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strength, supplier status, threat of substitution, and competition between new and existing companies, when developing a strategy. Strategic management is important for ensuring sustainability and may also be necessary in certain situations. During the strategy studies, it is important to clarify the concepts of vision and mission. A plan should be created to mature the processes that will lead to these facts. It is recommended to highlight this strategic structure. Additionally, businesses should determine their mission and vision while working strategically. To achieve these goals, it is necessary to clearly outline their strategic objectives, such as culture, competence, tools, etc. Furthermore, long, medium, and short-term goals should be set in relation to the strategic objectives and tactics. These targets should be monitored and measured often.

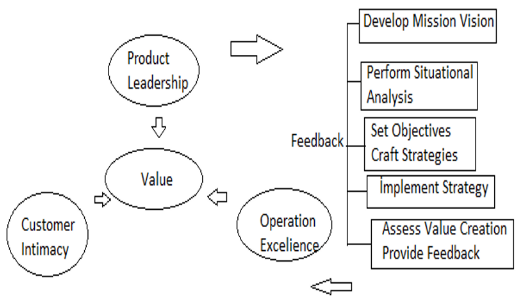

Fig. 1. Strategic Management Process in Businesses [1].

In the rapidly evolving technology-driven industry of aviation, it is imperative for companies to conduct a thorough self-analysis to enhance their sustainability and establish a strong global presence, enabling them to effectively compete with their counterparts. To ascertain its strategic standing, conducting a SWOT analysis to recognize its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats is imperative. By doing so, global airlines can realize their proficiencies and capitalize on them to propel forward. The identification of vulnerabilities within airline industries and the prevalence of low-cost transportation options are perceived as strategic threats to businesses. By conducting a comprehensive analysis, an enterprise can ascertain its standing in the market it operates in [2]. In order to create strategic management, it is important to gather and assess the efforts made by the business, and then implement them accordingly. The situation is typically managed by general management without being treated as a distinct issue. It can be likened to making a decision. Additionally, economic-based macro external factors such as inflation and unemployment, which are addressed in long-term plans, are incorporated into this process [3]. It seems that strategists engage in a process of analyzing and selecting methods for implementation.

According to Michael Porter's resource modeling related to the competitive advantage and shown in the figure, it is possible for airline companies to attain a competitive advantage by either implementing cost-effective measures or offering unique services. This approach enables businesses to excel in their respective industries or explore new markets [4]. One of the objectives of businesses when conducting strategic management studies is to attain active benefits that can enhance their profitability by achieving a competitive advantage. Airline operations faced with similar circumstances establish their strategies and proceed through the implementation and control phases subsequent to conducting internal and external analyses. It is important for companies to determine their capabilities and market demands in order to position themselves correctly. By doing so, they can shape their business structure accordingly. Airline companies typically focus on their core business of passenger and cargo transportation and outsource other activities. This process often involves forming partnerships and collaborations with various organizations, including those outside their industry [5]. In the aviation industry, strategic management practices refer to a crucial decision-making and implementing process utilized by airlines, airports, and other aviation businesses to attain their organizational goals.

These implementations include:

- **Market research:** Airlines and airports conduct the market research to gain insight into customer requirements and competitor actions.
- **Strategy setting:** They identify appropriate strategies to achieve organizational objectives.
- **Performance evaluation**: They continuously evaluate the performance of the organization to ensure that it achieves its objectives.
- **Risk management:** They identify and manage potential risks to ensure that the organization achieves its objectives.
- **Business planning:** They determine and implement business plans to ensure that the organization achieves its objectives.

These applications allow aviation businesses to maintain flexibility and make swift and precise decisions, even when confronted with alterations in market conditions and customer requirements.

1.1 Digital marketing

The aviation industry is a crucial sector in which digital marketing strategies are highly significant, given the rapid advancements in technology and ever-growing expectations of customers. The time and cost savings of digitalization make technology a strategic tool in terms of providing competitive advantage [6]. Businesses can benefit greatly from utilizing various opportunities offered by digital marketing to enhance customer loyalty, broaden their market reach and gain a competitive edge. Digital marketing allows businesses to effectively communicate with their customers in a direct manner. As an illustration, airlines can provide their customers with exclusive deals and promotions, thereby simplifying the process of tracking and booking their flights. One potential benefit of digital marketing is that it can encourage customers to interact more with companies, leading to increased loyalty. Additionally, digital marketing may assist businesses in expanding their market share and gaining a competitive edge. By utilizing digital channels, airlines have the opportunity to expand their customer reach and offer more favorable prices than their competitors. Additionally, digital marketing enables businesses to better track their competitors' actions and respond promptly. Digital marketing can play a crucial role in the strategic management of the aviation industry. It would be wise that businesses take into consideration their vision and mission when deciding on their digital marketing strategies. These strategies not only assist businesses in accomplishing their objectives but also provide them with the opportunity to enhance customer loyalty, grow their market share, and gain a competitive edge. Digital marketing is an effective means of achieving business goals while also ensuring sustainability by capturing competitive power.

In the aviation industry, digital marketing involves various marketing activities carried out by airlines, airports, and other businesses through digital technologies and the internet. Some common examples of these applications include social media marketing, email marketing, search engine marketing, content marketing, and mobile marketing. Airlines and airports are utilizing digital apps and websites to aid customers in booking, purchasing tickets, and checking in. Digital marketing plays a significant role in the aviation industry as it allows customers to easily find, compare, and purchase services online, resulting in increased customer loyalty and more profitable sales for airlines and airports. In addition, it could be said that digital marketing presents a more economical option for aviation businesses. This is due to the availability of free or inexpensive tools such as social media and email. Another benefit of digital marketing is the ease it provides for aviation businesses to assess the customer's situation and receive feedback.

1.2 Similar studies in the literature

There exist multiple studies on the correlation between digital marketing and strategic management within the aviation industry. One such study, titled "The Impact of Digital Marketing on Strategic Management in the Airline Industry," explores the influence of digital marketing strategies on the strategic management of airline companies. According to the study, the digital marketing has the potential to enhance customer loyalty, increase market share, and provide a competitive edge for airlines. The study titled "Strategic Marketing in the Airline Industry: A Study of the Use of Digital Marketing Tools" explores the utilization of digital marketing tools by airline companies and their contribution to strategic marketing efforts. The study indicate that digital marketing tools are extensively employed by airline companies and play a significant role in supporting their strategic marketing efforts. The study titled "Digital Marketing in the Airline Industry: A Study of the Impact on Customer Engagement and Loyalty" examines the effect of airline companies' digital marketing strategies on customer loyalty. The study reveals that digital marketing contributes positively to customer loyalty at airline companies, thereby increasing their market share and competitive edge.

The studies indicate that the connection between digital marketing and strategic management is crucial and advantageous in the aviation sector. Digital marketing has proven to enhance customer loyalty, widen market participation, and offer a competitive edge to airline companies. In national literature, there are many studies on the relationship between digital marketing and strategic management in the aviation industry. For example: the study titled “Digital Marketing in the Aviation Industry: Increase Customer Loyalty, Expand Market Share and Gain Competitive Advantage” examines the benefits of digital marketing strategies for airlines such as increasing customer loyalty, expanding market share and gaining competitive edge. The study titled "Digital Marketing in the Aviation Industry: Customer Experience and Loyalty" explores the impact of airline companies' digital marketing efforts on customer experience and loyalty. According to the study, digital marketing efforts by airline companies enhance customer experience and foster greater customer loyalty. The study titled "Digital Marketing and Strategic Management in the Aviation Industry: The Case of an Enterprise" explored the digital marketing and strategic management practices of an aviation industry enterprise. According to the study, the enterprise benefits from digital marketing by enhancing customer loyalty, increasing market share, and gaining a competitive edge. Additionally, the enterprise employs strategic management to achieve these benefits.

According to various studies in Turkish sources, it has been demonstrated that the relationship between digital marketing and strategic management is of utmost importance and provides numerous benefits in the aviation sector. The utilization of digital marketing is a valuable asset for airlines to enhance customer loyalty, broaden their market share and gain a competitive edge. In order to attain these goals, it is essential for businesses to implement strategic management practices.

2 Method and material

The aviation industry is a highly competitive field where companies strive to increase profitability in a sustainable way. To achieve this, aviation businesses strategically use digital

 https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202340202010

marketing channels to reach consumers. The purpose of this research is to assess the effectiveness of these digital marketing strategies employed by aviation companies.

The focal point of our research revolves around digital marketing consumers in the aviation industry. To support our findings, we have collected primary data from a survey conducted in the year 2023. Additionally, secondary data was gathered from various sources including TurkStat, research organizations dedicated to the aviation sector, and information found through Google. Furthermore, the questionnaires used were created on Google form and collected through an online platform over a period of one month (January-2023).

2.1 Population sampling

In this study, the convenience sampling method was utilized for sample selection. This method is one of the non-random sampling methods, enabling the researcher to access the necessary source for quantitative analysis data. The data collection tool used was the survey method, and the selection of the sample from the main population was based on the researcher's discretion. In this non-random method, the researcher carefully chooses a situation that is readily available and convenient for the study and this process is repeated until the desired sample size is achieved. In addition, this study uses descriptive and explanatory research methodology. The sample we have selected is representative of our population and consists of consumers who use airline companies in the province of Istanbul and benefit from digital marketing. As per the data of 2023, Turkey has 12 airline companies operating (SHGM 2023). However, due to limitations in reaching all the consumers in our research, we have used a sampling method for a portion of the sample. The formula we have employed for this process is as follows.

$$n = \frac{Np(1-p)}{(N-1)\sigma Px2 + p(1-p)}$$

formula,
n = Sample volume
N = Total number of consumer
p = Proportion of consumers buying and selling with digital marketing (0.5)
σpx 2 = Variance.

Based on our calculations, we have determined that a sample size of 286 or more will provide a 95% probability and a margin of error of 10%. Additionally, for 77 cases where the main mass is 1.000.000 or more, a sample size of 384 would be sufficient [7]. To accurately ascertain the number of digital consumers in this research, it was deemed suitable to survey a sample of 440 individuals based on the average values derived from Google data. The survey was conducted online through social media and email platforms in January 2023. After receiving 460 responses, 20 of them were eliminated due to incorrect answers, and the analysis of the remaining 440 responses was used to evaluate the research data. The respondents were notified that their involvement in the survey was completely optional and were provided with the assurance that their personal information would remain confidential throughout the process of data collection and analysis. It was concluded that the chosen sample size would be appropriate for the research to proceed.

2.2 Research model and hypothesis

The research model is designed to determine the importance of digital marketing in the strategic management of aviation.

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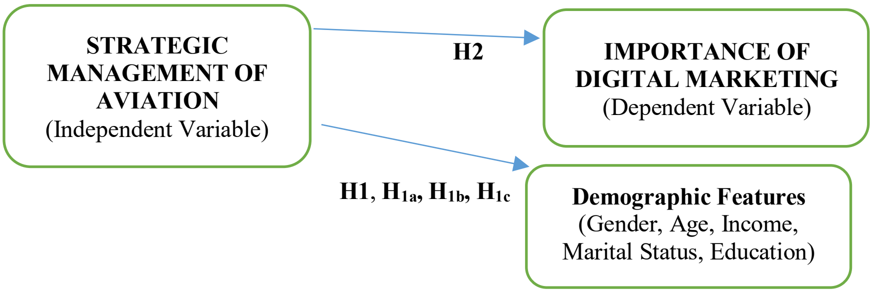

Through the analysis of data acquired from a quantitative research methodology, hypotheses have been formulated to ascertain the significance of digital marketing in the strategic approach of aviation. These hypotheses are presented below for your consideration.

Hypotheses:

H_1: Age of the respondents makes a difference on the level of strategic management of aviation.

H_{1a}: Gender of the respondents makes a difference on the level of strategic management of aviation.

H_{1b}: The level of education of the respondents makes a difference on the level of strategic management of aviation.

H_{1c}: The income status of the respondents makes a difference on the level of strategic management of aviation.

H_2: According to the data of the respondents, there is a positive impact of the strategic management of the aviation on the importance of digital marketing.

2.3 Data collection tool

During the data collection process for the research, we utilized social media and email to access the Google Form questionnaire. The initial section of the questionnaire comprises 5 variables, namely gender, marital status, age, education, and monthly income, which were used to establish the demographic status of the survey respondents. Prior to administering the scale, a preliminary survey was conducted with 40 airline consumers in Istanbul to ascertain the significance of the research topic and the suitability of the questions in achieving the desired research outcomes. The statistical methods were used to analyze the data obtained from the pre-survey study. The analysis revealed that the total Pearson correlation value of the scale exceeded 0.300, and the correlation value of each item ranged between 0.634 and 0.906. Consequently, none of the items were excluded from the scale. The second part of the survey comprises scale questions that feature statements to gauge the significance of strategic management and digital marketing in the aviation industry. The study involved the translation of 25 strategic management tools related to aviation from Rigby and Bilodeau's (2013) research. Bilgin Demir (2015) translated them into Turkish, resulting in a 16-question tool. The validity and reliability analyses of this tool were conducted to determine the respondents' knowledge and usage. In this study, we utilized a scale comprising of 10 questions to gauge the significance of digital marketing. We thoroughly examined the validity and reliability of this scale and found that it had a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.840, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measurement value of 0.723, and eigenvalue and explained variance ratio values of 4.449. Moreover, we determined that the "Barlett" test had a value of 138.548 (p=0.000). It has been found that the scale comprises only one dimension and the analyses conducted at various levels have yielded dependable results. The study involves 26 questions and employs a five (5) point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The definition of the relational survey model, which is a research model, was provided in this text. Additionally, the scales used in the study underwent a CFA analysis, with a first level CFA performed for each scale. The results indicated that the fit coefficient values $\chi2/df$ fell within the "perfect fit" range. It was also noted that the questions used were ordered from general to specific using the "Funnel" method.

During the administration of the questionnaire, all necessary explanations were provided to the respondents. The questionnaire did not require respondents to identify themselves, and as such, all responses were provided with sincerity, accuracy, and truthfulness. The study involved a total of 440 respondents, comprising 200 females and 240 males. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the influence of strategic management in the aviation industry on digital marketing, and the statistical results obtained will be utilized to determine the extent of this impact.

2.4 Analysis

During the data entry process, the SPSS 27.0 statistical package program was used to obtain the necessary evaluations. These evaluations were obtained through various methods, such as frequency analysis, comparison analysis, correlation, regression t-test, and ANOVA (one-way analysis of variance). To ensure the validity of the scales used in the study, factor analysis was performed, and reliability and validity analyzes were conducted. The factor loadings of the scales, which are represented by Cronbach's Alpha values, are provided in the Table.

2.5 Results

Table 1. Demographic Features of the Respondents

Gender	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Male	240	58. 3
Female	200	41. 7
Age		
16-30	16	2.5
31-45	153	55. 4
46-60	201	37. 9
61 and above	70	4.2
Marital Status		
Married	190	31. 3
Single	250	68. 7
Education		
High school	92	17.5
Associate degree	144	35.0
Bachelor’s degree	105	22.9
Master’s degree	87	23.8
Ph.D.	12	0.8
Monthly Income		
8500-10999TL	10	4.2
11000-15000TL	202	42. 5
15001 TL and above	228	53. 3
Total	**440**	**100. 0**

https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202340202010

When examining the demographic feature of the respondents, including gender, age, education, and monthly income, the majority of the respondents are male, with a proportion of 58.3%, while the proportion of female respondents is close to this rate. Based on information from the World Health Organization, it can be concluded that all respondents fall within the middle age range, as their ages range from 18 to 65. A significant portion of the respondents, comprising 55.4%, fell within the adult age range of 31 to 45 years. With regards to educational attainment, the majority of respondents, approximately 35%, had completed an associate's degree. Meanwhile, almost equal percentages of respondents held bachelor's and master's degrees at 22.9% and 23.8% respectively, indicating a high level of education among the respondents. Upon examining the income distribution, it was observed that over half of the respondents, specifically 53.3%, earned a monthly income of 2,500 TL or more.

Table 2. ANOVA Test Result for H_1 Hypothesis

Variable	Age Rate	N	Average	Standard Deviation	F	Sig.
	16-30	16	3.99	0.84	0.481	0.696
Digital Marketing	31-45	153	3.78	0.94		
	46-60	201	3.89	0.93		
	61 and above	70	3.62	0.87		
	16-30	16	3.98	0.85		
Strategic Management	31-45	153	3.79	0.95		
	46-60	201	3.88	0.94		
	61 and above	70	3.63	0.88	0.491	0.701

According to the tables in the SPSS output obtained as a result of the ANOVA test, the p value of Levene's test statistic is 0.82, indicating that the variances are homogeneous and it is appropriate to proceed with the ANOVA test. Upon further analysis of the ANOVA test results, it was found that the F value was 0.481. Based on the p-value of 0.696, it appears that the H_1 hypothesis can be rejected. Therefore, it can be inferred that there is no significant variation in the averages of Digital Marketing with respect to the age ranges of Strategic Management level.

Table 3. t-test Result for H_{1a} Hypothesis

	Gender	**N**	**Average**	**Std. Deviation**	**t**	**p**
Digital Marketing	Male	240	3.96	0.89	2.660	0.008
	Female	200	3.64	0.96		
Strategic Management	Male	240	3.86	0.88	2.650	0.009
	Female	200	3.74	0.94		

Initially, we evaluated the p value of Levene's homogeneity test for the assumption of homogeneity of variances, which resulted in a value of 0.835. Additionally, the p value of the independent sample t test statistic was 0.008, leading us to accept hypothesis H_{1a}. As a result, we determined that the gender variable has an impact on the averages of Strategic

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Management Level and Digital Marketing. Furthermore, we found that the averages of Digital Marketing in Strategic Management are higher at men, and this difference is statistically significant.

Table 4. ANOVA Test Result for H_{1b} Hypothesis

Variable	**Education**	**N**	**Average**	**Std. Deviation**	**F**	**Sig.**
	High School	92	3.93	0.96	2.574	0.038
Digital Marketing	Associate Degree	144	3.71	0.95		
	Bachelor's degree	105	3.69	0.97		
	Master's Degree	87	4.08	0.80		
	Ph.D.	12	2.72	1.06		
	High School	92	3.83	0.92	2.574	0.038
	Associate Degree	144	3.61	0.93		
Strategic Management	Bachelor's degree	105	3.19	0.97		
	Master's Degree	87	4.18	0.81		
	Ph.D.	12	2.82	1.06		

The *p* value for Levene's test statistic is 0.84, indicating that the variances are homogeneous and therefore the ANOVA test can proceed. Upon analyzing the ANOVA test results, it was observed that the F value was 2.574 and the p value was 0.038. As a result, hypothesis H1b was accepted, and it was concluded that there is a difference between the averages of Strategic Management Level and Digital Marketing based on education level. In general, it was noted that the average of Digital Marketing decreases as education level increases (excluding master's degree).

Table 5. ANOVA Test Result for H_{1c} Hypothesis

Variable	**Income level**	N	Average	**Std. Deviation**	**F**	**Sig.**
	8500-10999TL	10	4.01	0.86	0.416	0.660
Digital Marketing	11000-15000TL	202	3.86	0.95		
	15001 TL and above	228	3.78	0.97		
Strategic Management	8500-10999TL	10	4.11	0.75	0.415	0.650
	11000-15000TL	202	3.76	0.81		
	15001 TL and above	228	3.68	0.85		

According to the table from the SPSS output obtained from the ANOVA test, it appears that the p value for Levene's test statistic is 0.90, indicating that the variances are homogeneous and the ANOVA test can proceed. Upon further analysis of the ANOVA test result, the F value was determined to be 0.416, and the p value for this statistic is 0.660. As a result, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the averages of Digital Marketing based on the income status of Strategic Management Level, and hypothesis H_{1c} is rejected.

Table 6. Linear Regression Analysis Result for the Effect of Strategic Management of Aviation on Digital Marketing in Hypothesis H_2

	Regression Coefficients	**Standard Regression Coefficient**	**t**	**p**
Constant Mean Perception of Strategic Management	2.468 0.466	0.430	115.046 9.871	0.00 0.00
R		**Adjusted**	**F**	**P**
	R square	**R square**	97.448	0.000
0.430	0.184	0.183		

H_2: Based on the data collected from the respondents, we have found a positive correlation between the implementation of strategic management in aviation and the importance of digital marketing. We analyzed our hypothesis by creating a linear regression model with the independent variable being strategic management of aviation and the dependent variable being digital marketing. The ANOVA test showed that the model was significant. As a result of the data in the table related to the model, the student t test confirmed that both variables were statistically significant. Therefore, we can conclude that our hypothesis has been proven accurate.

3 Discussion and conclusion

In this regard, companies operating in the aviation industry make strategic management decisions and consider the significance of digital marketing, which is considered one of the crucial marketing departments of the present times.

It has been determined that there is no discernible variance in the Digital Marketing averages based on the age groups at the Strategic Management level. The participation of individuals of all ages indicates a seamless integration with digital systems. Recently, ticket sales applications utilizing digital channels have become increasingly prevalent. The ease and convenience of this method, which allows for comparisons, has made it a popular choice among participants of all age groups.

The averages of Digital Marketing in Strategic Management appear to be influenced by gender variable. Interestingly, female participants tend to achieve lower scores in comparison to their male counterparts, with the difference being statistically significant. Additionally, it has been observed that male participants show a greater affinity towards digital products and are more likely to utilize online services.

Based on the data analyzed, it appears that there may be a difference in the averages of Strategic Management Level and Digital Marketing with regards to the level of education. Overall, it seems that the average of Digital Marketing may decrease as the level of education increases, except for those with a master's degree. This suggests that individuals with higher levels of education may have some reservations about digital systems and may approach them with caution [8-16].

It has been determined that there is no discernible variance in the averages of Digital Marketing based on the income status of the Strategic Management Level [17]. Furthermore, it appears that changes in income level do not appear to have any impact on the utilization of digital systems.

Based on the data provided by the respondents, it appears that strategic management in aviation has a favorable effect on the significance of digital marketing. The digital realm facilitates the management of services, simplifies database organization, and allows for quicker analysis. Additionally, digital channels offer the potential for a wider range of services and the ability to personalize them. Using digital channels as a marketing tool can provide an array of benefits including saving time, place, and cost. As a result, digital marketing is becoming increasingly popular compared to other marketing methods.

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