

Shanghai Event Destination Marketing: Analysis Framework, International Experience and Countermeasures

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Abstract. In recent years, with domestic cities such as Shanghai, Guangzhou, Beijing, Hangzhou successively proposing the construction of international event capitals, competition for international event destination marketing has become increasingly fierce. Based on the five core elements of destination marketing, this paper proposes the "COOES" analysis framework, which can also be called the "chief operating officer (COO)" analysis framework, for Shanghai's international event destination marketing. On this basis, Shanghai and London are compared and analyzed in terms of five aspects of international event destination marketing, and the gap in the levels of destination marketing between Shanghai and London is identified. Finally, countermeasures are given in terms of the shortcomings of Shanghai's international event destination marketing.

Keywords: Shanghai; International event destination; Marketing; London; COOES analysis framework

1 Introduction

As a new economic growth point of the service industry in the 21st century, the role played by the event industry in the economy cannot be ignored [1] and [2]. In addition, events play a significant role in shaping a city's image and enhancing its influence and reputation at both the regional and global levels [3] and [4]. To consolidate the leading advantage of the event industry in China and strengthen its ability to serve the construction of the city's four nodes, Shanghai has proposed the building of an international event capital to be completed by the end of the 14th Five-Year Plan. In recent years, Shanghai has achieved adequate results in marketing the image of Shanghai as an international event destination by increasing the amount invested in the event industry, upgrading the infrastructure level of the industry, and creating a favorable business environment for the industry.

With the increasing degree of importance of international events, an increasing number of cities are investing in the construction of international event destinations and taking this as a major strategy through which to promote urban development. Scientific

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and effective marketing activities can improve the competitiveness of international event desalination and make cities stand out among the international market competition. The topic of international event destinations has begun to align with the vision of the majority of theoreticians as a notable research field [5],[6],[7],[8],[9] and [10].

However, compared with international event destinations in developed countries, China, as an international event destination, still exhibits a large gap in terms of marketing practices and theoretical research. First, there is a lack of holistic and systematic research on the marketing of international event destinations. Second, there is a lack of comparative research on the marketing of international event destinations under the framework of theoretical analysis, especially comparative research among key international event destinations. Third, the theoretical analysis framework of international event destination marketing is old and insufficiently adaptable.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to explore the construction of a system suitable for the marketing of Shanghai as an international event destination in the context of the fierce competition among such destinations worldwide. By comparing the initiatives of Shanghai and London in terms of marketing subject, marketing content, marketing object, marketing strategy, marketing effect evaluation, etc., and by drawing on the experience and practice of London, this paper can provide new ideas and scientific suggestions for the improvement and optimization of the marketing system of Shanghai as an international event destination to help refine its construction and, at the same time, to provide a reference for the marketing of other cities in China as event destinations.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Tourism Destinations

The term "destination" was first proposed by US scholar J.D. Hunt in "Image: a factor in tourism" in the 1970s and has since been borrowed and cited in various event studies [11] Both domestic and foreign scholars have conducted relatively rich research on the definition of tourism destinations.

The concept of a tourism destination has been variously defined by international and Chinese scholars, as well as the World Tourism Organization (WTO). According to Harris and Leiper, a tourist destination is a place where individuals travel to and decide to stay for a certain period in order to experience specific features or attractions [12]. Davidson expands this definition by describing a destination as a complex of tourism products, offering consumers a complete experience over a defined geographical area such as a country, island, or city [13]. Buhalis characterizes a tourist destination as a well-defined geographical area recognized by travelers as a unique entity with a policy and legal framework for tourism marketing and planning [14]. The WTO, cited in Pike, defines a local tourist destination as a geographical space where tourists stay for at least one night, providing a variety of tourism products and resources, clear geographic and administrative boundaries for management, and its own image to gain market competitiveness [15]. Goeldner and Ritchie view tourist destinations as specific geographic areas that offer visitors a variety of tourism experiences, usually delineated by some form of administrative boundaries [16].

In the context of Chinese scholars, Bao emphasizes the integration of tourism resources and facilities within a specific space [17]. Cui describes a tourist destination as an open system with a unified and holistic image of the tourist attraction system, requiring administrative support and possessing a hierarchical nature in terms of its spatial scope [18]. Zhang considers a tourist destination as a specific area with particular tourism resources capable of attracting a certain scale of tourists to engage in tourism activities, underscoring it as a spatial complex based on tourism resources, activities, facilities, transportation, and market demand [19]. Finally, Li defines a tourist destination as a comprehensive area with tourism attractions of interest to tourists, encompassing a collection of tourism products, reception facilities, and service systems that can satisfy tourists' needs for food, accommodation, transportation, tourism, shopping, and entertainment, serving as the foundation and carrier of tourism development [20].

2.2 International Event Destination

The literature on international event cities offers a multifaceted understanding of the characteristics and significance of these urban hubs. Chinese scholars have contributed various definitions, each highlighting different aspects of what constitutes an international event city. Wang emphasizes the importance of a strong industrial foundation, state-of-the-art event infrastructure, and comprehensive support services, alongside high-profile international events and esteemed event planning entities [21]. Zhai expands on this by suggesting that an international event city must not only attract and host international exhibitions and conferences but also demonstrate a level of service functionality on a global scale [22]. Xu identifies several key attributes, including a central location within a region, notable political and economic status, a significant role for the event industry, notable industrial radiation effects, substantial social benefits, high internationalization, and excellent urban functions and infrastructure [23]. Zhang proposes that an international event city should possess at least one, or two, or all three of the following: large-scale convention and exhibition venues, branded event projects, and renowned event organizers [24]. Wang refers to international event capitals as cities with substantial convention and exhibition facilities and strong reception services, where the event economy significantly contributes to the local national economy [25]. These definitions collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of international event cities and the importance of their role in the global event industry.

The judgment standard of international scholars regarding international event cities is based mostly on the ranking of cities by international event organizations from the perspective of conferences, exhibitions and large-scale convention and exhibition activities; moreover, these scholars can refer to the city rankings issued annually by the Union of International Fairs (UFI), the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA), and the Union of International Associations (UIA), as well as the cities hosting large-scale conventions and exhibitions, such as the Expo and Olympics.

2.3 Destination Marketing

The research on event destination marketing started late in China compared to in other countries, and the number of related works has increased gradually since 2000. Most domestic works are based on classic marketing theories, for example, product, price, promotion, and place (4P) theory, and put forward specific marketing tools such as product sales channels, pricing strategies, and customer relationship management from the perspectives of venues (conference and exhibition venues), exhibition-organizing enterprises, and the specific exhibition project level. However, few studies exist on the overall marketing packaging of event destinations from a global perspective; thus, the guiding significance of the marketing practice of event destinations is limited.

In contrast to the situation in China, international research on the marketing of international event destinations began to be carried out much earlier and has become more systematic. An international leading journal, Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, has published a large number of high-quality papers on destination marketing management, focusing on the research of destination marketing organization (DMO), event destination marketing system, destination promotion, destination image and so on. Studies on DMOs include those of Pearce [26], [27], [28]; Pike [29]; Harrill [30]; Ford and Peeper [31]; Leiper [32]; and Hays, Page, and Buhalis [33]. Studies on event destination marketing systems include those of Goodall and Ashworth [34]; Karin Weber [35]; and Davidson and Rogers [36]. In addition, there are many scholars with important works on event destination marketing [37],[38],[39], [40,], [41],[42].

3 COOES Analytical Model of International Event Destination Marketing

3.1 Analytical Model

Combined with the marketing literature on event destination marketing, this study finds that the key elements of event destination marketing are concentrated mainly in five aspects, i.e., marketing content, marketing organizer, marketing object, marketing effect and marketing strategy (COOES). This acronym indicates that the marketing of event destinations requires a high degree of planning and action from the city's chief operating officer (COO), and thus, this paper uses "COOES" for the analytical framework and foundation of this study.

The five elements of the COOES analytical framework are not isolated but rather have certain internal logical connections, as shown in Fig. 1, such as the marketing body through scientific refinement and careful packaging, the formation of local unique marketing content, the role of the marketing strategy, and the marketing content being delivered to the target marketing object. These connections result in the creation of destination exhibition firms and, then, the evaluation of the degree of marketing effectiveness of the associated professional organizations and through the evaluation of the comments received by the marketing organization. Finally, the evaluation opinions are fed back to the marketing body to provide guidance for the next marketing plan. The five core elements of the COOES analysis framework can form a closed-loop marketing system through interactions and continuously optimize the marketing work of event destinations in the process of their dynamic development.



Fig. 1. Intrinsic linkage of the COOES analysis framework.

3.2 Description of the Main Framework of the Analytical Model

Marketing content refers to the aspects of the specific marketing destination and what it markets to its marketing target. In the refinement of marketing content, full attention should be paid to the main considerations of event organizers in the selection of event destinations so that they can cast their favorable votes and impress event organizers; doing so would motivate such organizations to carry out activities in the area in question. When choosing destinations, international event organizers comprehensively consider the accessibility of such destinations, the practicality of facilities, service quality, destination desirability, safety, price and other key elements; thus, these factors should become the content of international event destination marketing.

The marketing organizer refers to who will carry out the marketing work of international event destinations. The core connotation of international event destination marketing is to promote the city's superior event environment to potential customers and attract them to carry out local events. All the event-related enterprises in the destination can share the benefit results brought by marketing, which is in line with the characteristics of noncompetition in the use of public products and nonexclusivity in the benefit; therefore, as the producer of public products, the government should act as the main body of international event destination marketing. In practice, destination marketing subjects around the world do have government participation, but there are also innovative practice cases, such as London.

The marketing object refers to whom the destination is marketed. When international scholars study marketing objects, they usually do so from the perspective of stakeholder theory. Generally, the marketing object of event destinations involves the central government, international organizations, multinational companies, participants, local residents and many other types of actors.

The marketing effect refers to the improvement of the destination's economy or reputation through marketing activities. The ongoing monitoring and evaluation of marketing effectiveness is essential for the enhancement and improvement of destination marketing and for public accountability. Only through scientific evaluation of marketing effects can we summarize the gains and losses of marketing actions, make timely corrections, and promote the scientific and efficient development of event destination marketing.

The marketing strategy refers to the method by which marketing is carried out. At present, it is more common to use online network means and the combination of online

and offline event marketing, promotional activities, etc., to carry out network marketing. All marketing strategies have their own advantages and limitations. Thus, there is no doubt that the marketing of international event destinations must comprehensively utilize all kinds of marketing strategies to carry out integrated marketing and that a single marketing strategy cannot achieve the ideal marketing effect.

4 Comparative Study on Marketing of International Event Destinations in Shanghai and London

4.1 Marketing Content of International Event Destinations

Shanghai focuses on its comprehensive strength as an international event destination in choosing its marketing content. In terms of hardware facilities, Shanghai's absolute advantage in terms of being the first in the world in convention and exhibition venue capacity is highlighted. In addition, emphasis is placed on marketing internationally influential exhibitions such as the China International Import Expo, China International Industry Fair, Shanghai International Automobile Industry Exhibition and 25 UFI member companies. In addition, the International Conference and Exhibition Industry Shanghai CEO Summit, which gathers executives from important global conference and exhibition enterprises, is also the "golden name card" of Shanghai's event industry. In terms of software support, this summit emphasizes the concept of "Shanghai event services" and an excellent business environment.

In addition to the comprehensive strength of the event industry, London pays attention to the comprehensive charm of the city in its choice of marketing content. On the social media homepage and in the work report of London & Partners, London is shown to be good at integrating all aspects of the destination, such as food, accommodation, transportation, tourism, shopping and entertainment, into its event destination marketing, shaping the image of the destination as a destination with a strong personality and unique desirability, which makes the marketing content richer and more attractive.

Through comparison, it can be found that when Shanghai conducts foreign marketing, its choice of marketing content is based on the core strength of the event, "Shanghai event services" and "small" business environment for the event, compared with the allaround charm marketing of London as an event destination, the marketing content of which is not systematic and integrated.

4.2 Marketing Organizer of International Event Destinations

The main marketing body of Shanghai as an international event destination is government departments and is jointly undertaken by the Shanghai Event Promotion Center and Shanghai Culture and Tourism Development Center, which are subordinate to the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce and Shanghai Culture and Tourism Bureau, respectively. The government-led marketing body can formulate marketing strategies from the level of the overall development of the destination, which is in line with the requirements for the sustainable development of the destination's event industry. In addition, the government has natural advantages in terms of its ability to integrate event resources, coordinate marketing funds, and be the authority of information release.

The main body responsible for the marketing of London as an event destination is the public–private partnership London & Partners, which is a nonprofit public–private partnership cofunded by the Mayor of London, European and national foundations and other partners and is the professional marketing body of London as an international destination, telling the wonderful story of London to the world in a professional way. The nature of this public–private partnership provides it with the authority of the government to participate in destination marketing and its professionalism and flexibility, which can provide London with a good reputation for London as an event destination and allow it to attract an increasing number of international visitors. This partnership also allows for partnerships with organizations that have a stake in London to be developed.

Through comparison, it can be found that the main body of Shanghai's international destination marketing involves two government departments at the same time, and although there is a relatively clear division of labor, problems, such as those related to motivation, flexibility and communication costs, still exist.

4.3 Object of International Event Destination Marketing

Shanghai focuses mainly on marketing to decision-makers who have weighty discourse power in the selection process of event destinations. Shanghai's main practices include, first, marketing to the central government, striving for national-level event projects such as the National Convention and Exhibition Center, the Asia-Xin Summit and the China International Import Expo to settle into Shanghai one after another. Second, Shanghai markets to international organizations to attract international conferences to be held in the city. The Shanghai Culture and Tourism Bureau is a member of the ICCA and leverages the ICCA's global membership network to market Shanghai as an event destination. In addition, the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce has strengthened its ties with the UFI. Third, Shanghai markets to governments to tout itself as an international conference and exhibition destination: 2010 was China's "World Expo Diplomacy Year", attracting more than one hundred heads of state and government, which made Shanghai, together with New York and Geneva, an important city for international multilateral diplomacy in that year.

London is also focusing on marketing to higher levels of government, international organizations and national governments. In addition, London pays special attention to multinational corporations, international associations in specialized fields, and local residents when marketing itself as an event destination. London's first unique approach includes marketing to multinational companies for corporate meetings and incentive travel. Its second approach is marketing to professional associations to motivate them to hold their annual conferences in the city. London's third approach is marketing to local residents to attract their recognition and spur their participation in events. London's fourth focus is on market analysis to accurately grasp the marketing target. From the perspective of market maturity and growth, London has selected the five most im-

portant core markets, North America, France, Germany, China and India, and, accordingly, has set up a total of 11 overseas offices in these core markets to handle its local business.

Through comparison, it can be found that in the selection of marketing targets, London, compared to Shanghai, pays more attention to the participation of a wide range of stakeholders, focusing on the creation of the destination's overall ecosystem and atmosphere, from the highest to lowest levels of government, from international organizations to international professional associations, and from multinational corporations to local residents. Moreover, the development of marketing activities can form an overall virtuous ecosystem cycle. There are still some aspects that can be improved in terms of marketing targets in Shanghai, mainly to enhance marketing to multinational companies, to strengthen the research on the international convention and exhibition market, and to market to a wider range of international organizations.

4.4 Marketing Effect of International Event Destinations

Through continuous and multiple marketing combinations, the brand of Shanghai as an international event capital has been formed. In terms of personnel promotion, the International Consultant for Shanghai Event Industry Development and the Shanghai Convention Ambassador hired by the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce and Shanghai Culture and Tourism Bureau, respectively, have marked effects in terms of attracting international conferences and expanding the international influence of Shanghai's event industry. In addition, the International Event Industry Shanghai CEO Summit has gradually expanded its international influence and become an important platform on which to market Shanghai's conference and exhibition industry. It is especially noteworthy that the public information service platform of the Shanghai event industry has laid a solid foundation for online marketing. Official accounts of Sina Weibo and WeChat have also been opened in the field of new mobile media. These factors have significantly improved the degree of online recognition of Shanghai as the international event capital.

Through a systematic and innovative marketing combination, London's image as a major international event destination and capital has become increasingly popularized. Moreover, the internationally acclaimed "conference ambassador" system was pioneered by London. In addition to its official website, London & Partners has official accounts on social media sites such as YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, and Weibo, which are well maintained and published on a daily basis. The Meet GB conference, jointly created by VisitBritain and the London Convention Bureau (part of London & Partners), is an important annual event for the international marketing of the UK in general and London in particular. Meet GB is free of charge throughout for carefully selected teams of international buyers, reinforcing the goodwill and business stickiness of the international exhibition community toward London. In terms of taxation, London has innovatively enacted preferential policies such as tax exemptions and tax reductions, which can be enjoyed by event activities in London and have, thus, enhanced the attractiveness of London as an event destination.

In comparison, Shanghai has obviously begun to comprehensively utilize a variety of marketing means in marketing itself as an international event destination and has achieved good results. However, compared with London, there is still much room for enhancement and improvement in Shanghai. The main problems in Shanghai are the insufficient internationalization of online marketing, lack of voice in international social media, experience of its own online platform needing to be improved, and insufficient richness of its marketing activities.

4.5 Marketing Strategy of International Event Destinations

In the evaluation of the effect of its marketing of itself as an international event destination, Shanghai is shown to be weaker compared to London. At present, Shanghai's content regarding the assessment of effect of marketing itself as an international event destination is relatively lacking, and there is no relevant content in important related documents such as the Shanghai Conference and Exhibition Regulations and the Special Action Plan for the Construction of Shanghai as an International Event Capital (2018-2020). A search on the official website of the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce reveals that in the past five years (2019-2023), no topics on the marketing assessment of Shanghai as an event destination in the public bidding for special research are found.

London attaches a great degree of importance to the evaluation of its marketing effectiveness. Over the years, London & Partners has invested much energy in developing and improving scientific assessment tools. First, it has cooperated with professional economic institutions to continuously adjust and improve the tools for marketing effectiveness assessment, aiming at using scientific methods to evaluate the positive impact of marketing performance on London's economy and reputation. The main tasks include evaluating the economic growth brought about by marketing, cooperating in the development of evaluation models and the Event IMPACTS Toolkit for commercial exhibitions and business conferences, and evaluating the reputation enhancement brought about by marketing.

The comparison shows that there is a large gap between Shanghai and London in terms of evaluating the effectiveness of them marketing themselves as international event destinations. In London, government departments, university research centers, research and consulting firms, and the main marketing body of the destination—London & Partners—have formed a strong research team that constantly optimizes and improves the tools through which the impact of events can be evaluated, clarifies the economic increment and reputation enhancement brought about by the marketing efforts of London & Partners in various ways, and scientifically evaluates the effects of London in marketing itself as an international event destination. Shanghai has not paid enough attention to marketing impact assessment and currently does not have a complete system or tool in place to perform such an assessment.

5 Countermeasures

5.1 Create a Professional Marketing Body Taking into Account Execution and Vitality

International event destination marketing is a systematic and professional undertaking, and a simple government- or enterprise-led marketing model can hardly achieve the expected marketing effect. It is believed that the marketing body of a professional international event destination should be a hierarchical, rationally structured and clearly defined organizational system, as shown in Fig. 2.



Fig. 2. Destination marketing organization system.

The marketing body of Shanghai as an international event destination should take the government as the leading body and partner with the Shanghai Event Industry Association and all kinds of event enterprises to form a team with both executive power and vitality. At the same time, the enthusiasm of Shanghai citizens to participate in marketing spontaneously should be stimulated. In terms of the organization of the marketing body, reference can be made to the practice of London in forming a public–private nonprofit enterprise, which can be maintained through government appropriation, enterprise sponsorship or the establishment of a common fund to maintain operations and can be undertaken by the Shanghai Event Industry Association. It is also possible for a joint office to be formed to market Shanghai as an international event destination within the government's existing system.

5.2 Refine the Target Market and Realize the Precise Locking of Marketing Objects

Shanghai's research on the event market, especially the international event market, is relatively lacking. Thus, the proportion of data and intelligence analyses in industry reports in the city should be increased so that the city can truly understand the market, accurately locate the core market and audience, and achieve "targeting" in marketing. In this regard, the government of Shanghai should strengthen its cooperation with scientific research institutions, industry organizations and universities. Furthermore, in addition to supporting financial and budgetary support, the government can also take the adoption of policy recommendations as an important assessment criterion for relevant organizations to motivate scientific researchers to conduct in-depth intelligence collection and market research and provide a scientific basis for the marketing of the city as an event destination.

5.3 Refine the Core Marketing Content and Carry Out Customization

A unified visual image should be created, and the core marketing content should be refined. When Shanghai carries out international event destination marketing, it should design and utilize a unified visual image and publicity slogan of itself as an international event destination as early as possible and strive to spur a marketing effect of Shanghai's unique "memory point" in the competition among many international event destinations. When marketing itself as an international event destination, it is necessary for Shanghai to pay full attention to the demand of event consumers, consider the core competitiveness elements of Shanghai as an event destination, form the main content of the "marketing package", and then expand the content of the "marketing package" according to the different levels of market demand. Then, according to different levels of market demand, the content of the "marketing package" can be expanded to cover various sectors of "eating, living, traveling, touring, purchasing and entertainment" of event tourism. When marketing, the customized "marketing package" is used to match different marketing objects to achieve better marketing effects.

5.4 Continuously Polish the Marketing Strategy and Market the Destination in an All-Round Way

At present, the public information service platform of Shanghai's event industry needs to re-include marketing and service content to establish an authoritative marketing system for Shanghai as an event destination. The service function of the public information service platform of the Shanghai event industry should not be neglected, and the most basic, instant information, such as frequently asked questions (FAQs), mailing lists and online consultations, should be perfected. In addition, adding selective services such as online listening, subscription and member registration systems can help the industry understand user preferences and, thus, cultivate user loyalty.

When carrying out online marketing, attention should be paid to visual design, such as through the use of additional beautiful photos of Shanghai's various tourist attractions. At the same time, photos of Shanghai's food, accommodations, transportation, tourism areas, shopping, entertainment, event tourism elements can be used to provide an all-round, comprehensive display of Shanghai's unique charm, increase the visual impact of such photos, and improve viewability and attractiveness.

Shanghai should also actively try to develop overseas social media account operations. The use of event marketing expands the influence of Shanghai as an international event destination. In addition, events with high degrees of public participation, with a combination of online and offline aspects, can be used.

5.5 Establish a Sound Evaluation Mechanism for the Destination Marketing Effect

A good evaluation of the marketing effect can clearly recognize the achievements and gaps in the construction of a city as an international event capital and make the next work plan more scientifical and professional; moreover, the effects and achievements of the current marketing plan can boost confidence and allow for the marketing work of international event destinations to be carried out. Scientific evaluation cannot be separated from the tripartite cooperation among the government, universities and enterprises, and thus, Shanghai industry actors should innovatively learn from London's experience to establish an evaluation system for the marketing effect of itself as an international event destination and aid in the construction of Shanghai as an international event capital.

6 Research Prospects

According to the five core elements of event destination marketing, this paper proposes the "COOES" analysis framework and compares Shanghai and London. Through such a comparison, it is found that there is still much room for improvement and progress in Shanghai's international event destination marketing, and countermeasures are provided. It is of comprehensive significance and value to the practice of Shanghai's establishment of itself as an international event destination, and the analytical framework also enriches the theory of international event destination marketing, opening a brandnew field for event destination marketing research.

However, limited by research conditions and industry practice, this study still has some shortcomings. First, the five core elements—marketing subject, marketing object, marketing content, marketing strategy and marketing effect—in the COOES analytical framework for the marketing of cities as international event destinations proposed in this paper are equally important; however, the weights of these five elements in terms of the marketing effect of international event destinations are not equal to those of other elements. In fact, the influence of the weights of these five elements on the marketing effect of international event destinations and the evolution of their relationship need to be further clarified. Second, each of the five elements in the COOES analysis framework contains many subprojects, none of which this paper exhausts.

The research on this topic is still in the initial stage, and in future works, it can be optimized and improved in the following ways. 1. The Delphi method can be used in future research, and the influence of the five elements of the COOES framework on the marketing effect of event destinations can be made clearer through expert scoring to allow for a more fine-grained focus on the actual work of the marketing of international event destinations and to improve the scientificity, reasonableness and pertinence of the COOES analytical framework. In future research, the subprojects of each core element in the COOES analytical framework can be deepened and refined to enrich and improve this framework.

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