

Impact of the colour perception of graphic design on promoting tourist destinations of Southeast Europe

ABSTRACT

Graphic design plays a crucial role in branding and marketing in the current digital era. Digital marketing impacts the promotion of tourist destinations. Tourism has become an important and growing sector that has influenced the development of a country's economy. Colour as an element of graphic design evokes emotions and sets a certain mood for an image or graphic. The purpose of this study is to determine the role of colour perception in graphic design in promoting tourist destinations of Southeast Europe (SEE). We aim to explore the relationship between graphic design and the tourism industry in SEE countries, focusing on their tourism logos and slogans for advertising their tourist destinations. The analysis of the main characteristics of logos and slogans shows that they can be effective tools for promoting and supporting tourism in countries in the SEE region. It was observed that there is compatibility between the colours used in the logo and the country flag in 64% of the tourism logos of SEE countries. The colour green is the most commonly used colour in logo design.

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Colour perception, graphic design, tourism logo and slogan

Introduction

Graphic design is a creative field that has become increasingly relevant and popular over the past few decades. Graphic design has a significant impact on our daily lives and ourselves. Graphic design can be defined as the art or profession of visual communication that combines images, words and ideas to convey information to an audience. A graphic designer can use his professional skills in typography, visual art, page and text layout, computer software, etc. to achieve the goal of his assigned creative project (Han, 2020). The basic elements of graphic design are shape, colour, space, form, line, value, and texture. In order to create a creative and unique design, the graphic designer should combine these elements. Colour has a pivotal role in graphic design. Colour as an element of graphic design evokes emotions and sets certain mood for an image or graphic.

Additionally, colour perception is a complex phenomenon (Singh, 2006; Labrecque, Patrick & Milne 2013) and is related more to human emotions than to rational thinking (Ivanova, 2011). On the other hand, graphic design plays a crucial role in branding and marketing in the current digital era. Moreover, it is not only about creating visually appealing and memorable designs, but also about effectively and correctly conveying certain message to its target audience. In addition, there are new ways to achieve these goals in the Industry 4.0.

Digital marketing plays an important role in the advertising and promotion of any successful business, and the tourism industry is no exception. Digital marketing involves marketing to consumers through digital channels, including websites, mobile devices, and social media platforms. Graphic design is one of the most powerful arts that breathe new life into digital marketing.

The tourism industry can be considered an important sector for accelerating economic growth, increasing efficiency, and economic recovery (Stoykova & Paskaleva, 2021). In 2022, the Travel & Tourism sector contributed 7.6% to global GDP; an increase of 22% from 2021 levels (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2022).

Graphic design and creative branding in the tourism industry can attract tourists to visit one particular country or even a whole geographic region, attend an event, and sightsee some tourist attractions. The countries can promote themselves as an attractive tourist destination by designing a tourism logo, tourism slogans, and official websites for tourism and travel. These elements can support the success of the tourism industry. Logos are the most concise graphical vehicle for communicating a message. Tourism logos of countries should convey the country's identity. Slogan writing is perceived as the art and science of the concise use of words (Foster, 2012). According to Kotler, Haider & Rein (1993), image creators should develop a slogan that links a specific campaign and theme. Normally a slogan should be short and easy to remember. The logo and slogan design are produced in various digital formats that are appropriate and used in the website, web, and mobile applications.

The purpose of this study is to determine the role of colour perception in graphic design in promoting tourist destinations of Southeast Europe (SEE). We aim to explore the relationship between graphic design and the tourism industry in SEE countries, focusing on their tourism logos and slogans for advertising their tourist destinations.

Literature Review

The development of information and communication technologies has offered many challenges in tourism and this whole process has led to changes in the dynamics of the design and marketing of consumer experiences (Mossberg, 2007; Buhalis & Law, 2008; Neuhofer, Buhalis & Ladkin, 2012).

Ljajić & Bektović (2021) claim that Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo*, and Bosnia and Hercegovina are excellent examples of countries where design is believed to be an effective methodology and tool for socio-cultural improvement. They prove that graphic design has a positive effect on the economy of Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo*, and Bosnia and Hercegovina (Ljajić & Bektović, 2021). Sebbeh (2022) analyses the graphic design elements that can be used to accelerate the development of the tourism industry in Ghana. The results show that graphic design has a pivotal role in the development of tourism in Ghana (Sebbeh, 2022).

Sonnleitner (2011) gives an overview of destination image theory and its interrelationships with destination marketing and branding. The obtained results suggest that most tour-

ist destinations spend a considerable amount of money and time creating and boosting a positive image (Sonnleitner, 2011). Dionyssopoulou, Pridezi & Mylonakis (2013) investigate the role of visual communication in promoting tourist destinations in Greece. The authors come to the conclusion that the destination's pre-visit image assumed by visitors of a tourist destination is essential for the competitiveness and promotion of the tourism product in Greece (Dionyssopoulou, Pridezi & Mylonakis, 2013). Agapito & Lacerda (2014) explore the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the marketing and brand design of destination experiences. The authors present some practical applications of ICT at different moments of tourism trips, considering the impact on the marketing of destination experiences (Agapito & Lacerda, 2014). Situmorang, Wibowo & Fauzi (2019) argue that graphic design is the main determinant of digital marketing in the tourism industry. They prove that graphic design in digital marketing affects the sales of products and services of a travel company (Situmorang, Wibowo & Fauzi, 2019). Mohamed (2023) makes a conclusion that graphic design can help to promote more successful tourism services achieving tourist satisfaction at all touch points of their tourism experience. Wu (2021) explores the design of tourism cultural and creative products, using field research, questionnaire survey, analytic hierarchy, and other methods, based on regional historical and cultural elements. Marshalls (2007) analyses the role of a country's image in promoting a tourism destination. The author finds out that county image develops partially from natural elements that cannot be altered or easily manipulated as history, natural, geographical, people, etc. (Marshalls, 2007). Zhang & Wang (2020) claim that regional brand is the main core in the design process of tourism destination. The results reveal that visual design plays an important role in shaping the brand image of tourist destinations (Zhang & Wang, 2020). Jha & Biswal (2020) generate creative graphics using mathematical equations such as number theory, position vectors and trigonometry functions. The mathematical approaches, such as the kinematics of pendulum and recursive number theory, can also be used in various fields, including website design, magazine covers, bags, toys, etc. (Jha & Biswal, 2020).

Many researchers analyse the main characteristics that effective and successful slogans should have (Pike, 2004; Balmer & Grayser, 2006; Donaire & Galí, 2012; Semone & Kozak, 2012; Kohli, Thomas, & Suri, 2013).

Rivera & Gutierrez (2018) prove that tourism slogans are effective marketing initiatives that may influence young travellers to stay longer in a destination. Zeybek & Ünlü (2016) argue that a country's identity and image are achieved primarily through designing a good logo and also that each country has to design a promotional tourism logo, which reflects its visual image. The authors find out that half of the European Council member countries emphasize their geographical and cultural characteristics in their tourism logo designs. The results show that certain

countries aimed to develop behaviours by addressing emotions through the use of slogans (Zeybek & Ünlü, 2016).

Huang & Lin (2017) examine the awareness effects of tourism slogans of ten prominent destinations in Asia. The obtained results reveal that the slogans of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan were the most effective in terms of destination recognition (Huang & Lin, 2017). Galí, Camprubí & Donaire (2017) prove that slogans tend to be very simple and have an exclusive appeal, which comes from emphasizing the affective component of the message. Abdia & Abdollah (2013) argue that the slogan has a substantial role in calling the audience's attention to one or more aspects of a product or service and that slogans claim that the advertised product or service is of the highest quality.

Materials and Methods

The materials for this study are the official tourism logos and slogans of the Southeast Europe (SEE) countries. The SEE countries included in the sample are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, and Turkey.

We removed Kosovo* from the list above because there is no available information about the official tourism logo and slogan of this country. Each of the analysed SEE countries has an official logo and slogan to promote tourism destinations, events, and attractions. The information regarding the official tourism logos and slogans of SEE countries is collected from either the official website of the National Tourism Organization or the official website of the Ministry of Tourism. The data was collected and processed as of August 8, 2023.

In this study, we employ various methods of data collection, colour analysis, descriptive statistics, and comparative analysis. Data analysis is conducted using descriptive statistics in EViews 12. We examine the main characteristics of the official tourism logo and slogan of SEE countries.

Results and Discussion

The objective of this study is to analyse the impact of colour perception of graphic design on promoting tourist destinations of Southeast Europe (SEE) considering their official tourism logo and slogan.

Colours are connected with certain associations and qualities due to their natural occurrence, specific usage, and cultural context (MacDonald, 1999). Colours generally affect both physical and psychological levels, and colour perception is a matter of personal taste and preference. Individual differences may vary by gender, age, and culture. Colour perception is very often accompanied by a strong emotional impact and has the

ability to influence a person's physical condition. Table 1 presents the main colour psychology and associations.

Table 2 presents the official tourism slogans of the examined SEE countries, the number of words, the number of characters (no spaces), and number of characters (with spaces) used in each slogan. All of the slogans were collected from the official tourism websites of the country. Each of the slogans is short and consists of two, three, or four words. Additionally, 36% of the slogans contain four words, while 27% of the slogans contain three words. And the same percent (27%) of the slogans contain two words. Also, each one of the slogans is unique, credible, and entertaining. All of the analysed SEE countries use slogans to promote their tourist destinations.

Figure 1a and Figure 1b show the graphical representation of the results of descriptive statistics based on the number of words. The results reveal that the slogan of Romania contains the greatest number of characters without spaces, with a total of 26 characters. On the other hand, the slogans of Montenegro, Croatia, and North Macedonia contain the lowest number of characters without spaces (10 characters). The mean of the number of words in each slogan is 2.9, and the median is 3. The maximum number of words in each slogan is 4 and the minimum is 1. The standard deviation of the number of words is 1. The mean of the number of characters with space for each slogan is 17.7, while the median is 15. The maximum number of characters with space is 29 and the minimum is 11. The standard deviation of the number of characters with space is 7.0. The mean of number of characters (no space) for each slogan is 15.8 and the median is 13. The maximum number of characters without space in each slogan is 26, while the minimum is 10. The standard deviation of number of characters without space is 6.4. The values of skewness are positive for number of characters with spaces and the number of characters without spaces, indicating that the distribution is right-skewed with a long right tail. All kurtoses are positive, suggesting heavier tails and a more peaked distribution. To summarize, the SEE slogans effectively and successfully convey specific messages to their target audience and address emotions.

Table 3 summarizes the official tourism logos of the examined SEE countries. Each of the logos is collected from the official tourism websites of SEE countries. Analysing the individual logos, it can be concluded that they are highly diverse and the main elements of their graphic design (colour, typography, shape, composition) are successfully combined and interact. It is necessary to clarify here that more than one colour is used for the text and individual visual images in the design of each individual logo. Colours can evoke different ideas, feelings, emotions, and associations, but the choice of colour definition is always based on intuition (Gorn et al., 1997). On the other hand, the colours used in logo design need to convey a strong message, tell a story, and create a mood.

Table 1

Colour Psychology and Associations (Author's systematization)

Colour	Positive Associations	Negative Associations
Red	Passion, Power, Fearlessness, Energy, Strength, Excitement	Anger, Warning, Defiance, Danger, Aggression, Pain
Green	Spring, Nature, Environment, Health, Fertility, Safety, Freshness, Prosperity, Hope, Growth	Envy, Stagnation, Inexperience, Decay, Misfortune, Boredom, Sickness, Blandness, Enervation
Yellow	Summer, Sun, Gold, Happiness, Optimism, Creativity, Warmth, Intellect, Extraversion	Illness, Hazard Irrationality, Cowardice, Caution, Folly, Anxiety, Frustration, Treason
Blue	Sky, Sea, Unity, Peace, Stability, Depth, Trust, Dependability, Logic, Loyalty, Security, Serenity	Depression, Passivity, Obscenity, Conservatism, Emotionless, Unfriendliness, Coldness, Aloofness, Uncaring, Unappetizing
White	Snow, Peace, Purity, Innocence, Cleanliness, Simplicity, Clarity, Sophistication, Freshness	Cold, Surrender, Clinical, Banality, Sterility, Death, Unfriendliness, Sterility, Isolation, Emptiness, Elitism
Grey	Intelligence, Restraint, Dignity, Maturity, Intelligence, Reliability, Timelessness, Neutrality, Balance, Strength	Shadow, Concrete, Drabness, Boredom, Lack of confidence, Hibernation, Depression, Lack of energy, Dampness, Blandness
Black	Coal, Power, Formality, Depth, Solidity, Style, Power, Security, Authority, Sophistication, Elegance, Substance	Fear, Night, Void, Evil, Secrecy, Anonymity, Coldness, Menace, Oppression, Heaviness, Mourning
Orange	Confidence, Courage, Innovation, Energy, Warmth, Friendliness	Frustration, Deprivation, Immaturity, Frivolity, Ignorance, Sluggishness

Table 2

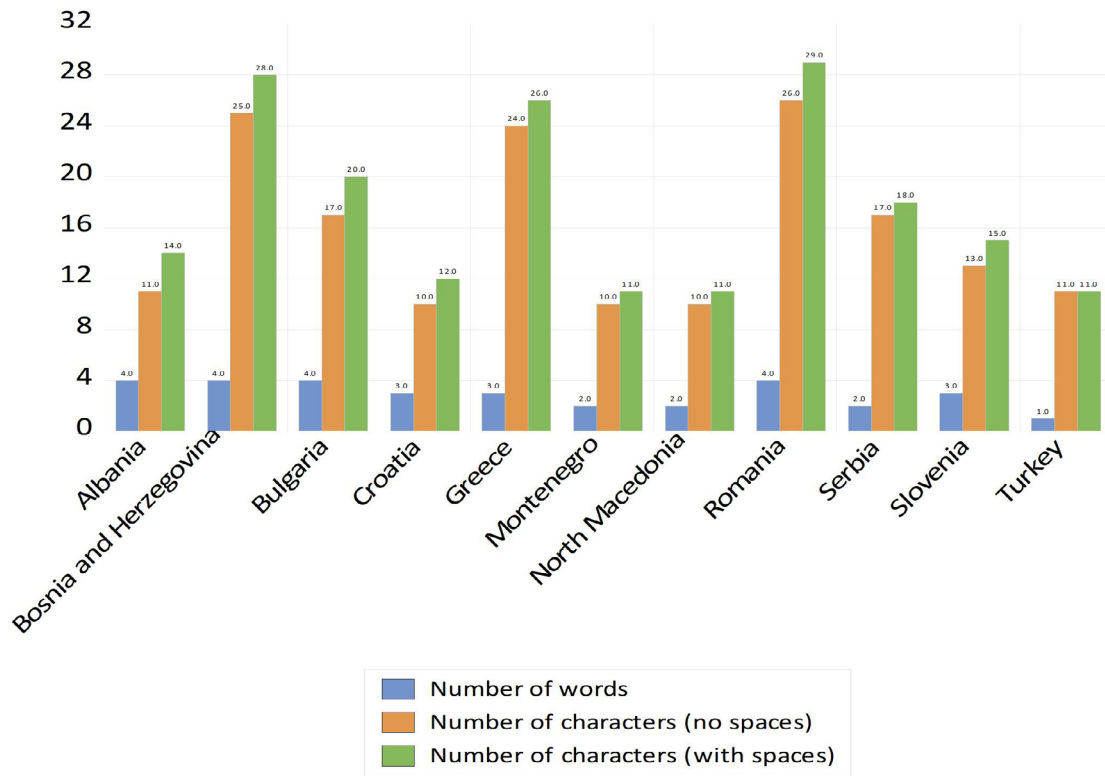
Official tourism slogans of the SEE countries (Author's systematization and calculation)

Country (Tourist destination)	Tourism slogan
Albania	Go your own way
Bosnia and Herzegovina	where everything is possible
Bulgaria	A Discovery to Share
Croatia	Full of life
Greece	A life-changing experience
Montenegro	Wild Beauty
North Macedonia	Taste life!
Romania	explore the Carpathian garden
Serbia	Experience! SERBIA
Slovenia	I feel SLOVEnia
Turkey	Sustainable

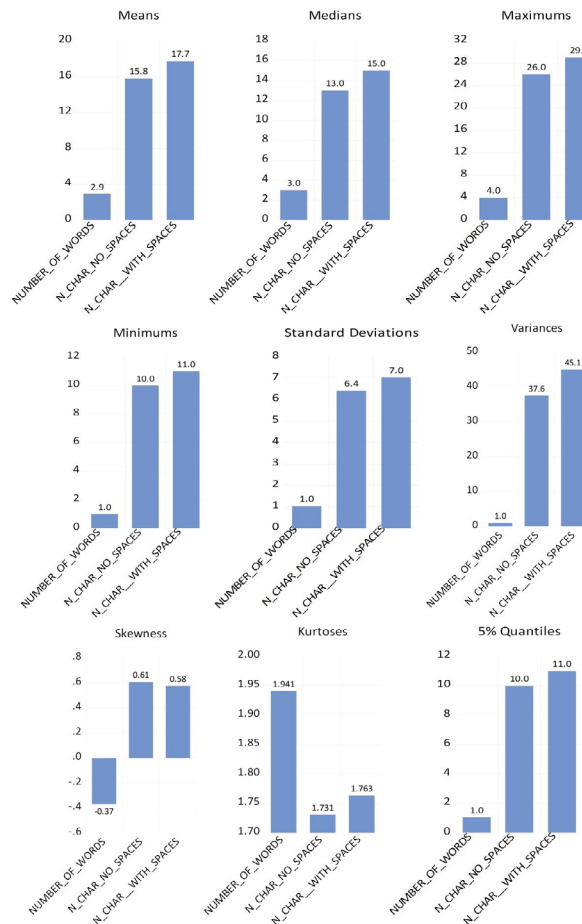
Figure 2a, Figure 2b, and Figure 2c display information regarding colour, typography, and emblem as elements in the tourism logos of SEE countries. The results obtained reveal that there is compatibility between colours used in the logo and the country flag in 64% of the tourism logos of SEE countries (Figure 2a). 73% of logos contain the colour green, which is associated with spring, nature, environment, safety, and freshness. This colour is found in logos from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Romania, Slovenia, and Turkey. What's more, it is the most commonly used colour in logo design.

The colour blue is used in 64% of the examined logos (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, Romania and Turkey). In some of the logos, the colour blue is compatible with the country's flag, while in others, it can be associated with the sea, unity, peace, stability, trust, and security. On the other hand, the colour yellow is used in 36% of tourism logos, such as those of Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia.

The colour yellow is positively associated with summer, sun, happiness, optimism, and warmth. In summary, we can conclude that the colours blue, green, and yellow are suitable choices as elements in the design of the tourism logo.














» **Figure 1a:** Graphical representation of the summary of descriptive statistics by number of words (Author's calculation)



» **Figure 1b:** Graphical representation of the results of descriptive statistics by number of words (Author's calculation)

Table 3

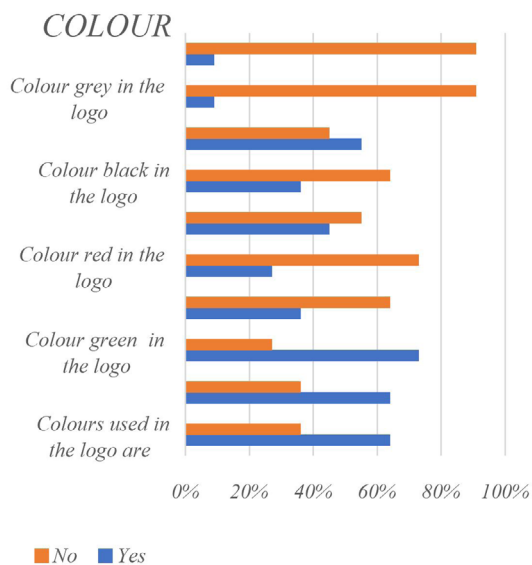
Official tourism logos of SEE countries (Author's systematization)

Country (Tourist destination)	Tourism logo
Albania	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	
Bulgaria	
Croatia	
Greece	
Montenegro	
North Macedonia	
Romania	
Serbia	
Slovenia	
Turkey	

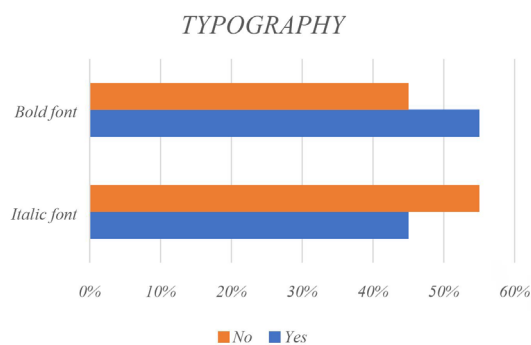
27% of logos contain the colour red (North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey) and this colour is connected with passion, power, energy, strength, and excitement. The colour orange is used in the design of five tourism logos (45%, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, and Romania). The orange colour is positively associated with confidence, courage, warmth, and friendliness. The colour black is used for the text in four logo designs (Albania, Croatia, North Macedonia, and Turkey).

Figure 2b shows the typography as an element of the tourism logos of SEE countries. Italic font is applied in 45% of the tourism logos of SEE countries, while bold font is used in a total of six logos (55%).

Figure 2c displays the symbol as an element of the tourism logos of SEE countries. There is a geographical emblem in 55% of the logos. Respectively, a cultural emblem is used in 18% of the logo designs, specifically in Bulgaria and Turkey. Additionally, four of the tourism logos (36%) do not feature any emblem.

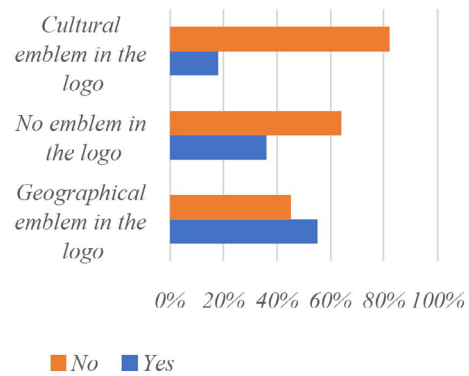


» **Figure 2a:** Colour as an element of the tourism logos of SEE countries (Author's calculation)



» **Figure 2b:** Typography as an element of the tourism logos of SEE countries (Author's calculation)

EMBLEM (SYMBOL)



» **Figure 2c:** Symbol as an element of the tourism logos of SEE countries (Author's calculation)

Conclusion

The countries can promote themselves as attractive tourist destinations by designing tourism logos, tourism slogans, and official tourism and travel websites. Graphic design and digital marketing play a crucial role in advertising tourist destinations in every country. The countries of Southeastern Europe are no exception either. It can be assumed that the development of the tourism sector in each individual country would have a positive impact on the prosperity and growth of the tourism industry in the entire geographical region. We established that one of the most crucial elements of logo design is colour, which must be effectively and skilfully integrated with the other elements of the logo. These results confirm the findings of previous researchers (Alexander, 2019; Sementina, 2019; Kronberg, 2020).

The objective of this study is to analyse the impact of colour perception of graphic design on promoting tourist destinations in Southeast Europe (SEE), taking into consideration their official tourism logo and slogan. The analysis of the main characteristics of logos and slogans shows that they can be effective tools for promoting and supporting tourism in countries in the SEE region. We have established that all of the analysed SEE countries use slogans to promote their tourist destinations. The results reveal that 36% of the slogans contain four words, while 27% of the slogans contain three words. And the same percent (27%) of slogans contain two words. The maximum number of words in each slogan is 4, and the minimum is 1. The maximum number of characters with space is 29, while the minimum is 11. Each of the slogans is unique, credible, and entertaining. The SEE slogans effectively and successfully convey specific messages to their target audience and evoke emotions. It was observed that

there is compatibility between colours used in the logo and the country flag in 64% of the tourism logos of SEE countries. The colour green is the most commonly used colour in logo design. Italic and bold fonts are commonly used in tourism logos. Additionally, it was found that 36% of the examined logos do not feature an emblem. It can be suggested that all elements of the logo design have been successfully combined. We found that tourism slogans and logos are effective marketing initiatives that can attract more visitors to tourist destinations in SEE countries and make them more appealing to travellers.

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