# Customers' satisfaction on food truck in Malaysia: A Structual Equation Modeling Approach.

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**Abstract**

Food truck is a transformation of street food and has contributed to the vitality of urban life across cultures for centuries and this business currently becomes the worldwide business trend. In Malaysia scenario, a food business operating by using a modified trucks appeared fastest increased in Klang Valley. Due to this increasing, the objective of this study is to investigate the customer satisfaction on food truck in Malaysia. A total of 120 customers of food truck from Kuala Lumpur were chosen. The non-probability sampling technique was applied because of unknown population and convenience sampling method was employed. The results show that food quality (H2) and service quality (H3) have a positive relationship with customers' satisfaction on food truck. Meanwhile, the results indicated that physical (H1) and Image (H4) did not have any positive relationship with customers' satisfaction on food truck in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** PLS, Food truck, Physical Environment Quality, Service Quality, Image, Food Quality

## 1.0 Introduction

IBIS World reported that the food truck industry in the world has grown an average of 9.3% per year over the last five years (Bandaru & Venkateshwarlu, 2017). In addition, a 2012 forecast by Intuit Inc.found that this industry is projected to account for approximately $2.7 billion US dollar in food revenue by 2017, making it a substantial player in the food service industry. As stated by Thomas (2016), in United States food truck has influences the social, cultural and economic opportunities for both vendors and customers. Meanwhile in North America, Australia and European cities, food truck business become the pop-up restaurants ( Henderson, 2017) and throughout the country in America, food trucks performed better than or as well as restaurants ( Anenberg & Kung, 2014). According to Cardoso,

Companion and Marras (2014) the young entrepreneur chefs in developing countries love to start food truck business due to the low start-up cost. Meanwhile, the expanding of food truck has influences the food tourism in New Zealand ( Thomas, 2016).

In Malaysia scenario, a food business operating from specially-equipped trucks have appeared in Klang Valley ( Venner, 2014) and this food truck phenomenon become popular among urban life across the cultures and countries recently (Rahayu, Zulhan, Aliffaizi & Mohd Faeez, 2017). Food truck industry can be seen as a popular vendor especially in big cities like in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. Selangor, for instance, has about 130 licensed food truck operators and the numbers will double in 2018 and the government gears up to issue around 1,000 licences to operators by the end of the year. Averages of 5 food trucks open every month in Klang Valley and to activate the industry to the next, promising level. Kuala Lumpur will soon open 6 new food trucks parks (The Star,Feb 21,2017).

Food truck is a transformation of street food and has contributed to the vitality of urban life across cultures for centuries ( Wessel, 2012). It is the culinary business owner's creativity that currently becomes the worldwide business trend. The truck is typically contains cooking facilities to prepare food (Lennekin, Dermer & Geller, 2017). It is also known as the emerging enterprise that serves variation of foods from simple, comfort food to gourmet food (Esparza, Walker, & Rossman, 2014).

The business activities from taking order, dine in to payment are conducted in this vehicle which is specially designed to attract customers. Since its unique concept, the food truck has become popular and it offers great opportunity and profits ( Zahir, 2018). Besides, customers claimed that food trucks meet their expectations because they want quick service, healthy food, varieties of food that differ from home and friendly environment (Conner, 2011)

Food reviewer described food truck industry as a fast-catching trend, hyped by the millennial and Generation Y with the urban setting food trucks run smaller, more easily manageable kitchens than restaurants. It is also depicted as a service to fulfill the desire for fresh, local, quality food served quickly and conveniently and they can test new products real-time with daily menus. It is a place for experience urban street dining right in the heart of the city and has already become the perfect 'lepak' spot for urbanites( Anenberg & Kung, 2014).


## 1.1 Problem statement and Research Objective

The annual budget for 2018 has offered variety of incentive for the citizens of Malaysia to generate income, including a soft loan of RM 120 million to 1,000 food truck entrepreneurs (Sinar Harian, 2017). The statistics on food truck business in Malaysia (refer Figure 1) shows that Kuala Lumpur has fastest increase in size of food truck compared to Selangor and Negeri

Sembilan (Google trend, 2017)). Now days, food trucks are a trend business especially in the cities because most owners prefer owning a mobile truck than a proper shop. It's mobility gives them a wider area coverage. This industry also has a very positive prospect due to its cost start-up is cheaper, quicker to establish and food specialty offered to the customers (SMEinfo, February 13, 2018). As the number of food truck businesses has increased, the government of Malaysia has taken the step of restructuring the laws related to it in order to secure the well-being of the industry and its quality. For instance, Majlis Bandaraya Petaling Jaya (MBPJ) has drew up guidelines for food truck business and the guideline had now been adopted by other local councils. The food Truck locations around the city also become being tourist attractions as they could draw to sample a variety of food ( The Star, April 17, 2018). Its means that people acceptance towards food truck are increased and it's crucial for the entrepreneurs to improve their services to achieve customers' satisfaction through upgrading of such factors like physical environment quality, food quality, services quality and image. However, the study on customer satisfaction on food truck is still sparse and due to the increasing of food truck entrepreneurship in Klang Valley these days, there is a need to investigate the correlation factors towards customers' satisfaction on food truck in Malaysia. Figure 1 shows the numbers of food truck business in Malaysia in 2017.
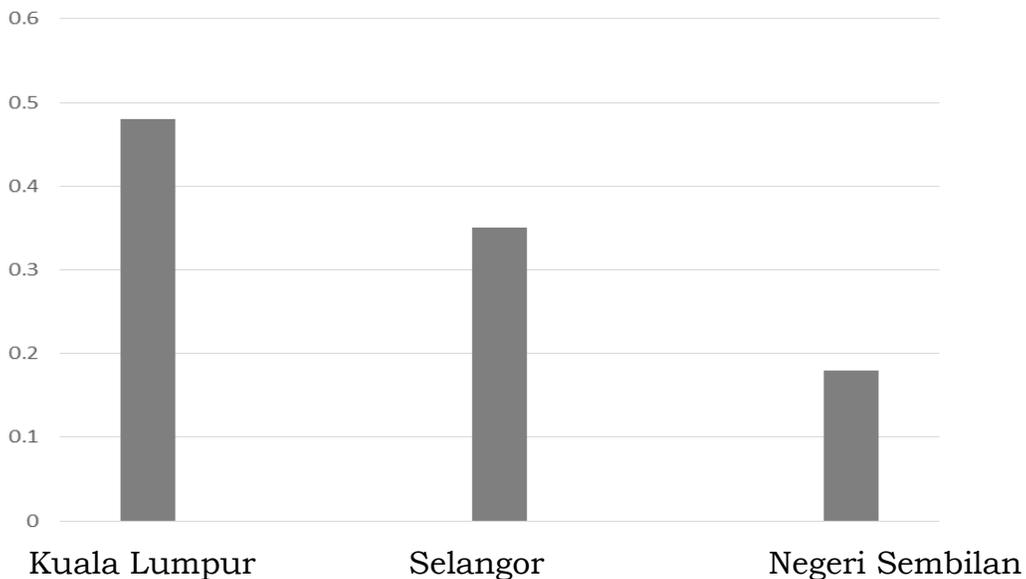


Figure 1: The food truck business in Malaysia in 2017 (Sources: Google Trends, 2017)

## 2.0 Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Physical Environment Quality

Physical environment quality that refers to ambiance of food truck, layout and visible signage do have significant influence on the perceptions of the consumers. According to Han & Ryu (2009), the lighting, design and layout, and staff appearance can determine the customer satisfaction in restaurant industry. Other than that, image and good perception on the restaurant industry can be built up (Ryu & Jang, 2007).
Physical environment has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction since it affects customers emotionally (Hulten, 2011). Nezakati (2011) further added that physical environment quality of fast-food restaurant have a positive relationship with customer loyalty. Ashraf, Akhter and Noor (2014) also found that physical environment quality determines the customer satisfaction on fast food restaurant. Rojas and Camarero (2008) gave credit to beautiful and attractive layout of restaurant that allure customers to repeat their coming. Consumers see hygienic and environmental risk and convenience and hedonic benefits in food-truck dining. Therefore, physical environment quality plays a major role in satisfying customer needs on food truck industry.

**H1: There is a positive relationship between physical environment quality and customer satisfaction on food truck industry in Malaysia.**

Food Quality
Food quality consists of taste, freshness of meals and amount of food, hygiene includes the factors of clean dining area cleanliness and clean staff), and menu (display, variety and knowledge of items).Food quality, hygiene and menu have a significant and positive influence on customer satisfaction (Almohaimmeed, 2017).  Food quality is also  considered important factor in restaurant quality in satisfying customers and increase the coming of them to the place (Namkung & Jang, 2007).
In addition, Shaharudin, Mansor, and Elias (2011) found that the food quality is becoming a crucial factor that have impacts on the consumer. According to Schellhase (2000) and Asghar et al., (2011),  food quality plays a major role in satisfying customer needs and determines the success of restaurant industry. They also concluded that food quality does have a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. It is agreed by Qin, Prybutok and Zhao (2010); Ahmad and Zaid (2015) and Norain (2016). A research in New York restaurants showed that there is a positive correlation of food quality to customer satisfaction due to the healthy menu and less cholesterol (Draper & Smith, 2004).  Conclusively, food quality has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction on food truck industry in Malaysia.

**H2: There is a positive relationship between food quality and customer satisfaction on food truck industry in Malaysia**.

Service Quality

A complete quality service is done by identifying the good characteristic of restaurant like customer rating and improves the hygiene level. Staff should be friendlier, so that the best service can be offered to the customers (Susskind & Chin, 2000). Food trucks meet their expectations because they want quick service, healthy food, varieties of food that differ from home as well as the friendly environmentally (Conner, 2011) while Le Comte (2016) concluded that delicious menu and quality of service, the outstanding food truck branding is crucial because it can easily be remembered.

Best quality service has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction specifically in restaurant industry (Han & Ryu, 2007 and Norain, 2016). Meanwhile, Nguyen and Leblanc (2002) discovered that quality service really depends on the people who served the services. Without any doubt, nobody can deny that best service quality does determine the customer satisfaction (Kim, 2009).

**H3: There is a positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction on food truck industry in Malaysia**

Image

Image involves psychologically through emotion and behavior on product or services. Image plays an active role in differentiating one business from others (Latif, 2015). According to Nguyen and Leblanc (2001), corporate image is related positively with loyalty and satisfaction of customer on education, retailing and communication in different locations. Bloemer and Schroder (2002) discovered that corporate image has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction.

In addition, Wu and Sen (2014) added that corporate image play a major role in restaurant marketing as it has proven that a restaurant with good image has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. In conclusion, image plays a big role in affecting the customer satisfaction positively.

**H4: There is a positive relationship between image and customer satisfaction on food truck industry in Malaysia**.

Based on the discussion above, The research model employed in this study is as shown in Figure 2.
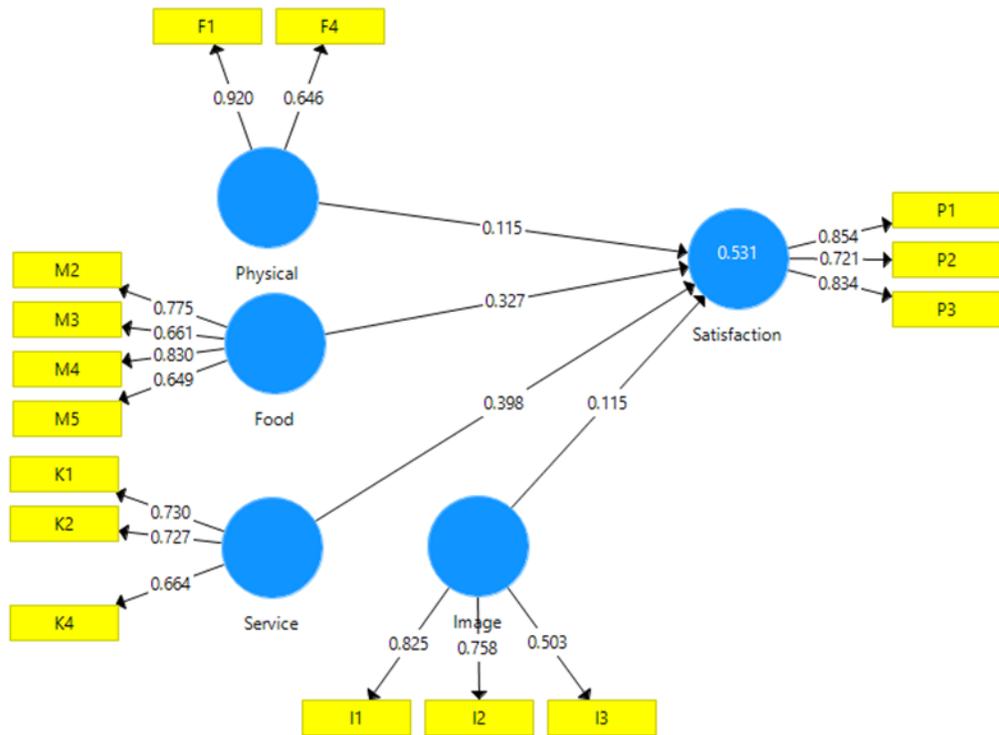
Figure 2: Research Model

## 3.0  Research Methodology

3.1 Sample Size
This study used a self-administrated questionnaire with closed-ended questions via google form with the link is https://docs.google.com/forms. Non-probabilty sampling technique was employed due to unknown population in Klang Valley. The questionnaire was distributed based on convenience sampling method to residents in Kuala Lumpur area due to it's fastest increase in food truck business. Convenience sampling method is applied in distributing questionnaires because of easy access issue for gaining information from the target respondents.  Only one hundred and twenty (120) respondents were completed answer all the questionnaires for three months of study. As suggested by Roscoe (1975), samples between 30 to 500 are recommended for non-probability sampling technique. Thus, this total of respondents were enough for this study.

3.2    Research Instrument
The instruments of the study  was adapted from  Kisang , Hye-Rin  and Woo (2012). The data measuring technique used was five point Likert Scale measures with the anchors ranging from (1)= "Strongly disagree"; (2) = "Disagree";(3)= "Less agree", (4)=  "Agree" and (5) = "Strongly agree" (Najib,1999).

3.3    Pilot Study
A pilot study has been conducted in order to ensure the validity and reliability of the items used in the questionnaire. Twenty respondents at Klang Valley were selected randomly for this pilot study. Table 1 shows the Cronbach's alpha for Pilot Study.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha for Pilot Study

| Variable | Factor | Item | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|---|---|---|
| Independent | Physical Environment | 4 | 0.73 |
| | Food Quality | 6 | 0.84 |
| | Service Quality | 4 | 0.76 |
| | Image | 3 | 0.53 |
| Dependent | Customer satisfaction | 4 | 0.79 |
| **Total** | | 21 | 0.93 |

Table 1 shows the  total value of Cronbach's alpha for the five factors such physical environment, food quality, service quality and image food truck was at 0.93.  According to Mohd Najib (1999), the value of Cronbach's alpha from 0.9 to 1.0  is  the highest reliability. Therefore, this instrument was very reliable,  appropriate, suitable and can be accepted to be used in real study.

**4.0 Data Analysis Food Truck**
The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed due to non-normality data distributed and the research goal is to predict the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable(Ringle, Wende, and Becker, 2015 and Ramayah, Jacky, Francis, Hiram & Mumtaz, 2018).

## 4.1 Respondent Demographics

Table 2 shows the demographic information of 120 respondents for this study.

Table 2: Respondent Profile

| Variable | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| *Gender* | | |
| **Male** | 45 | 37.5 |
| **Female** | 75 | 62.5 |
| | | |
| *Age range* | | |
| **15-20** | 37 | 30.8 |
| **21-30** | 50 | 41.7 |
| **31-40** | 27 | 22.5 |
| **41 and above** | 6 | 5.0 |

From Table 2 shows that respondents were consists of female (62.5%) and male(37.5%). Most of the respondents were at the age range of 21-30 (41.7%), 15-20 (30.8%) and 31-40(22.5%). It may be because at these age range they are love of eating and "lepak" with their friends. Due to that, food truck parking is the best spot to gathering together for urbanites. The least was at the age range of 41- above (5%).

## 4.2 Measurement Model

This measurement model is prerequisite before testing the hypotheses.According to Hair et al. (2017), accepted value for factor loadings are set at >0.5, the composite reliability (CR) are >0.7 and the average variance extracted (AVE) are at >0.5 to measure the convergent validity. Table 3 shows the assessment of construct reliability as well as convergent validity for the variables of this study. The composite reliability (CR) values of 0.769 (Physical), 0.744 (Image), 0.750 (Service), 0.821 (Food) and 0.846 (Satisfaction) demonstrate that theses constructs have high levels of internal consistency. Similarly, the variables in this study demonstrate good convergent validity. All the constructs achieve a minimum threshold value of 0.5 for average variance extracted (AVE) which is an indication that the items explain more than 50 per cent of the construct's variances (Hair et al., 2014).

Table 3:  Convergent validity

| Construct | Items | Loadings ( >0.5) | CR (>0.7) | AVE (>0.5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Physical** | F1 | 0.920 | 0.769 | 0.632 |
|  | F4 | 0.646 |  |  |
| **Image** | I1 | 0.825 | 0.744 | 0.502 |
|  | I2 | 0.758 |  |  |
|  | I3 | 0.503 |  |  |
| **Service** | K1 | 0.730 | 0.750 | 0.501 |
|  | K2 | 0.727 |  |  |
|  | K4 | 0.664 |  |  |
| **Food** | M2 | 0.775 | 0.821 | 0.537 |
|  | M3 | 0.661 |  |  |
|  | M4 | 0.830 |  |  |
|  | M5 | 0.649 |  |  |
| **Satisfaction** | P1 | 0.854 | 0.846 | 0.648 |
|  | P2 | 0.721 |  |  |
|  | P3 | 0.834 |  |  |

Table 4 shows the assessment of discriminant validity using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio Correlations as suggested by Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015).  The results demonstrate that the values are lower than required threshold value of HTMT 0.85 (Kline, 2011) and HTMT 0.90 (Gold et al., 2001), indicating that discriminant validity is established for the constructs. It also shows that the result of HTMT does not show a value of 1 on any of the constructs (Henseler et al., 2015), which also confirms discriminant validity. Discriminant validity refers to the extent the constructs are truly distinct from one another.

Table 4:  Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

|  | Food | Image | Physical | Satisfaction | Service |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Food** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Image** | 0.809 |  |  |  |  |
| **Physical** | 0.725 | 0.725 |  |  |  |
| **Satisfaction** | 0.798 | 0.734 | 0.679 |  |  |
| **Service** | 0.671 | 0.650 | 0.507 | 0.900 |  |

4.3 Structural model

Before assessing the structural model, it is important to ensure that there are no lateral collinearity issues in the structural model (Ramayah et. Al, 2018). According to Kock and Lynn(2012), although the vertical collinearity (discriminant validity) are met, the lateral collinearity must be assessed

separately for each subset of structural model. Therefore,table 5 presents the outcome of the collinearity test. The VIF value for each of the constructs is lower than the offending value of 3.3 (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2006), which suggesting that there is no issue with collinearity in the study.

Table 5: Collinearity Statistic VIF

|  | **Satisfaction** |
| --- | --- |
| **Food** | 1.576 |
| **Image** | 1.363 |
| **Physical** | 1.357 |
| **Service** | 1.235 |

In testing hypotheses, table 6 illustrates the results of path coefficient assessment using the bootstrapping procedure for each of the hypothesized relationship in the model. The hypothesis is supported based on 3 condition which are i) direction and beta value will show the direction either positive or negative, ii) T-Value must higher than 1.645, significant at 0.05, or 2.33; significant at 0.01 and iii) Lower level (LL) and (UL), there should not have 0 in the between (Ramayah et al., 2018).

From the proposed relationships, two of them are found statistically significant at 99 per cent confidence interval (Food -> Satisfaction, beta=0.327, t= 3.300, LL =0.156, UL= 0.483; Service -> Satisfaction, beta=0.398 , t= 4.953 , LL = 0.273, UL =0.532 ).  Hence, it is concluded that Food and Service have positive relationship on food truck customers' satisfaction. On the other hand, the other two hypotheses are found statistically not significant (Image -> Satisfaction, beta =0.115 , t =0.996 , LL= -0.109, UL = 0.278 ; Physical -> Satisfaction, beta =0.115 , t =1.080 , LL=-0.056 , UL =0.279).

Table 6: Path Coefficient Assessment

| Hypothesis | Relationship | Beta | SE | T Value | P Values | LL | UL | Decision |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **H2** | Food -> Satisfaction | 0.327 | 0.099 | 3.300 | 0.001 | 0.156 | 0.483 | SUPPORTED |
| **H4** | Image -> Satisfaction | 0.115 | 0.116 | 0.996 | 0.160 | -0.109 | 0.278 | UNSUPPORTED |
| **H1** | Physical -> Satisfaction | 0.115 | 0.106 | 1.080 | 0.140 | -0.056 | 0.279 | UNSUPPORTED |
| **H3** | Service -> Satisfaction | 0.398 | 0.080 | 4.953 | 0.000 | 0.273 | 0.532 | SUPPORTED |

## 5.0  Discussions and conclusion

The study revealed that food quality (H2) and service quality(H3) have positive relationships towards customers' satisfaction on food truck.  It is in

line with Schellase (2000), which states that food quality is a key value of positive relationships with customer satisfaction. According to the study of Asghar et al., (2011), the quality of food in restaurants has a positive impact on customers and is essential for restaurant success. In addition, Draper and Smith (2004) found that food quality in New York restaurants has a positive correlation value to customer satisfaction as a whole, the restaurant has a healthy menu and less cholesterol. This finding is also inline with the studies done by Ahmad and Zaib (2015) and Khisang et al.(2012) revealed that the quality of food were significant predictor to customer perceived value and satisfaction. This may be because in general people have always been connected with food and love to eat especially passions on eat good quality and healthy meal.Thus, food quality is the important factor to meet customers' satisfaction on food truck business.

There is a positive relationship between service quality(H3) and customers' satisfaction on food truck. This finding is supported by Han and Ryu (2007), which states that high quality services will bring a positive value to customer satisfaction. According to Schellhase (2000), high service quality has a positive relationship value with customer satisfaction. Furthermore, the findings of this study is also inline with study done by Kim (2009) which stated that the quality of positive services will usually lead to high customer satisfaction. This may be because of the food truck entrepreneurs always keep in their mind that serve a good service quality to customers also is a priority to run a successful food truck business. Therefore, the quality of service is one of the key drivers of customer satisfaction.

On the other hand, physical environment quality(H1) and image quality (H3) of the food truck did not have positive relationship with customers' satisfaction on food truck business. The findings are not in line with the study conducted by Hulten (2011), Nezakati (2011) and Rojas and Cameraro (2008) stated that there is a positive relationship between the quality of the environment and the satisfaction of restaurant customers. Also contradict with the study done by Khisang et.al ( 2012) indicated that the quality of the physical environment and the restaurant image  were significant predictors of customer perceived value.  This may be because a comfortable physical environment and image may not being a priority factor attract customers as they may prefer a reasonable price due to the majority of respondents in this study are at the age range below 30 years old (72.5%). Normally at this age they are students and young worker who have a small and medium food budget monthly, so they may prefer to eat at the food truck which offer quality of good food and services with reasonable prices.

Therefore the findings of this study are expected to provide new insights and implications to academicians, government and practitioners related to food truck businesses. On academic side, this study makes significant contributions to the customer satisfaction by exploring the impact of food quality, service quality, physical environment quality and image quality of the food truck.  As for  the perspective of government,  this study will be

able to accommodate on how to manage and control the food truck businesses and activities. From the practitioners' overview, this study shares the important influential role of customers' satisfaction, therefore the retailing owners or managers are able to find ways to attract and retain customers.

5.1 Limitation and Future Research

Even though this study makes significant contributions to academicians, government and practice, it was limited in some ways, and therefore some future research locations and others variables such as price are suggested. Perhaps the results would be more informative if the sample size is large and data gathered from other cities in Malaysia are included.

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