

An Empirical Study on Factors affecting Tourist Satisfaction in Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu.

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ABSTRACT

Mamallapuram/Mahabalipuram in Tamil Nadu is one of the famous cultural heritage sites announced by UNESCO, attached to the World Cultural Heritage site attracting all the attention and tribute from the tourists all over the globe. Cultural heritage tourism has widely framed as a market slot for Indian tourism industry. This market is being sustained and encouraged by increased number of patronizing voices from international and domestic tourists; obviously our government has expanded the infrastructure facilities as well. Mamallapuram or Mahabalipuram is a castle of several beach resorts and assorted tourism attractions in and around the place with native attractive spots helping the tourists to rejuvenate their body, mind and soul. With a frame work to create a center of attention and preserving the tourists, this study aims at assessing the satisfaction level of tourists with the a difference in service quality, attributes of Mahabalipuram, and ensure their interest towards Responsible Tourist and encouraging Heritage Tourism in the destination. The study was conducted during April 2022 among 188 tourists from United States of America, Europe, Australia and Asia. The gathered was analyzed using SPSS software. Hypotheses 1: was set to test the significant between overall tourist satisfaction and destination amenities such as good accommodation, food quality, transport availability, sufficient shopping complex, and kindness of local natives, Hypothesis 2 was set to test the preference to be a responsible tourist and heritage tourism factors such as eco-friendly rooms, mode of transport, switching over to heritage tourism site to maintain nativity, local produce merchandise. Finally Hypothesis 3 was set to test the significant difference between preferences to become a responsible tourist towards heritage tourism development in Mahabalipuram., The survey conducted among the tourists' for this study very well proved that overall tourists and visitors are satisfied with the accommodation facilities, quality of food served in the hotels/resorts and restaurants, kindness native residents and plenty of shopping facilities and local produces available at the destination. While analyzing on the aspects of tourists' interest towards Heritage Tourism in Mahabalipuram, the majority crowd of the tourists visiting Mahabalipuram wish to contribute towards Heritage tourism that can be considered by their preference to switch over to nearby optional tourism spot in order to sustain and uphold the capacity of the existing tourist destinations

Keywords: Mamallapuram, Tourism Development, Heritage tourism, Tourist Satisfaction, Responsible Tourist

1. Introduction

Tourism is a socio-cultural and economic occurrence which necessitates the movement of folks to different countries, places of interest, outside their usual environment for entertainment, and business, professional or personal purposes. Tourism is one of the largest service industries in the world. Hui et al, 2007 explored in his research that the de-regulation of

the airline industry, coupled with technological advancement, emergence of e-commerce and demographic changes, Travel and Tourism generates direct and indirect jobs continuously, which in turn increase the world economy across the globe. Tourism plays a vital role for the Indian economy and obviously keeps growing at constant ratio evenly spread over a period of time frame. The World Travel and Tourism

Council predicted that tourism generated ₹17.50 lakh crore (US\$220 billion) or 9.5% of India's GDP in the year 2018 and created 41.675 million job opportunities, 8.1% of its total direct employment. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism_in_India - cite note-1 Tourism sector gradually grows at an annual rate of 6.9% to ₹32.05 lakh crore (US\$420 billion) to be attained by the year 2028 (9.9% of GDP). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism_in_India - cite note-2 More than 17.9 million foreign tourists arrived in India in 2018 compared to 17.4 million in 2018, showing a growth rate of 3.5%. This ratio ranks India the 22nd most visited nations in the world and 8th in the Asian continent and Pacific. In the year 2015 Chennai, Mumbai, Delhi, Agra and Jaipur were the top five visited cities in India by foreign tourists. Worldwide, Chennai is ranked 43rd place, which includes Mamallapuram, the world heritage center that is being visited frequently by the tourist. The "Tourism and Travel Competitiveness Report" 2019 ranked our country at 35th place out of 140 countries all over the globe. However, the Covid-19 pandemic steered the tourism industry into a phase of nightmare after October 2019.

As we know India is rich in cultural heritage, ancient temples and palaces, monuments and forts demonstrating the potential of the nation to other parts of the world. Several promotional strategies by the tourism departments have attracted abundant number of tourists from both domestic and foreign sectors to the heritage tourism destinations. Tamil Nadu is one of the Southern states in India, popularly known for the cultural heritage potentials. The significance and opulence are established by the acceptance of cultural heritage destinations such as "Airavateswara Temple" in the outskirts of Kumbakonam, Thanjavur Big Temple (Brihadeeswarar Temple), bunch of monuments at Mahabalipuram and Gangaikonda Cholapuram Temple at Jayakondam listed in the World Heritage list of UNESCO.

Pertaining to the title of our paper, the Sea Shore Temple of Mahabalipuram and Five Rathas attract maximum number of overseas tourist every year. The improvements in tourism

industry benefits itself along with various opportunities in its allied sectors such as retail, transportation, food and construction. Refereeing the articles of Farsani et al 2012, found that the increasing curiosity of tourists always travels with huge amount of surplus income created a larger demand for services in the tourism industry. Stevens, Knutson, & Patton, 1995 explored that to attain successful tourism destination, the industry has to supply superior service and determine tourist satisfaction with considerable vital factors attracting the tourist.

The name Mahabalipuram also called as Mamallapuram is assumed to have been attained after the Great Pallava King First Narasimhavarman, who was basically a great wrestler in native Tamil language. Distinguished for its monuments and stone carvings, Mamallapuram is located in the East of the Coromandel coast, about 60 km south of Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Consisting variety of historical monuments built largely between the 7th and the 9th century AD, most of the architectural designs represents the Dravidian architecture with the Buddhist design. Mahabalipuram, otherwise known as the temple town, contains approximately forty monuments which include Arjuna's Penance the largest open air-bas relief in the world and Tiger cave. The place is called as "The Seven Pagodas" because of its height among all its seven temples; six of which were flooded by the sea and the subsequent soil erosion. Every monument is a marvel by itself in Mahabalipuram and is uniquely different from one another. Mahabalipuram Shore temple is unquestionably one of the most wonderful tourist places of Tamil Nadu that attracts numerous tourists annually, with several other attractions of the town. Our aim in this study is to collect data on opinions from the tourists about various beach resorts, tourism attractions in and around Mahabalipuram and their satisfaction levels at different dimensions with an aim to improvise the sites and facilitate the tourists to have a peaceful trip and explore the criteria on making them to visit again.

2. Literature Review

Sirakaya et al, (2004) described in the study on managing customer satisfaction and measuring

its influences in a tourist destination which is crucial for the development, survival, and success of an organization. The success situation creates new opportunities in the destination and that encourages local entrepreneurs to establish new restaurants, travel agencies etc. that ultimately aims at satisfying the needs of customers and the tourists. Kozak & Rimmington (2000) expressed in their research on tourist satisfaction which is vital for marketing the tourism destination successfully because of its persuading nature and attraction of the services offered in the destination, and their interest to visit again. Alegria and Garau, (2010) explored from the tourism literature proving that by and large satisfaction of tourists and their objective to revisit are completely determined by their assessment of various aspects of the tourism development, however lack of environmental management is always doubtful to remain feasible for long run.

Cultural/Heritage tourism is swiftly developing globally after the involvement of UNESCO, announcing various heritage sites. Prentice (1993) defines "heritage" can be promoted as tourism products apart from what we practically represent as landscapes, buildings, artifacts, natural history, cultural traditions that are literally or metaphorically passed on from generation to generations. Also Hall and Zeppel (1991) defines "Heritage tourism as an experiential tourism based on being involved in and stimulated by the folklore, visual arts, festivals and native culture; Cultural tourism is perfect form of visiting historic sites, preferred landscapes, buildings or monuments, can also be termed as experiential tourism to seek an encounter with nature and feeling part of the history of a particular race and demography". Peterson (1993) identifies three key underlying principles for heritage tourism sites such as "to experience a difference of a particular place, to discover an intellectual experience and sharing the narration of the heritage site with others". The revenue generated from tourist visiting the destinations is used to protect and maintain monuments, natural and cultural resources in the destination that stimulates the government to hosts and safeguard our natural resources.

On contrary, Pigram (1990) Garrod and Fyall, (2000) states that heritage tourism sector received relatively modest attention from the perception of heritage tourism. According to Butler (1993), Heritage tourism is "a type of tourism that can maintain its capability in an area for an indefinite period of time" and UNESCO defined tourism carrying heritage capacity as "the utmost number of tourist visiting the heritage destination should not cause destruction to the physical, economic, socio-cultural environment, if done so, that will decrease the indecent quality of tourist satisfaction on that heritage site". Twining-Ward & Butler (2002) heritage tourism is an integrated component that is used to measure the livelihood sustainability around the tourism destination spot. Therefore this study aims at assessing the tourist satisfaction with the different service quality attributes of Mahabalipuram and their interest towards Tourism Development (TD) in the tourist destination using tourist satisfaction indicators.

3. Research Methodology

Both primary and secondary data were utilized for this study. Secondary data has been mainly collected from related websites, publications, News papers, journals and magazines. A structured questionnaire was administered to the tourists visiting Mahabalipuram in order to collect the required primary data for the study. Our questionnaire had three phases, divided equally. First phase dealt with demographic information of the tourists, second phase dealt with information related to the tourist travel behaviour and third phase was constructed with two questions, starting from strongly disagree to strongly agree for the variables that decide on overall satisfaction score of tourists in the destination and their preference to become responsible tourists in the destination; The second question is on collecting information regarding the destination amenities and heritage tourism indicators on an ordinal scale. This study was conducted during April 2022. To select the sample tourist respondents, convenience sampling method was used. A total of 248 tourists from United States of America, Europe, Australia and Asia were approached, and 198 of them agreed to respond the survey. Ten of the 198 filled in questionnaire were omitted due to missing data and inconsistencies. Therefore final

sample size of this study is 188. The data collected were analyzed using SPSS software. The demographic profile and travel behaviour of the sample tourists were analyzed using simple percentage method. The hypotheses of the study were tested using One-way and Two-way ANOVA. Factors included in the Tourist destination amenities affecting the satisfaction level were: good accommodation, food quality, transport availability, sufficient shopping complex, and kindness of local natives. Factors for Heritage tourism indicators affecting the satisfaction level were: eco-friendly rooms, mode of transport, switching over to heritage tourism site to maintain nativity, local produce merchandise.

4. Hypothesis of the Study

H1 (null hypothesis): There is no significant difference between overall tourist satisfaction and destination amenities.

H2 (null hypothesis): There is no significant difference between preference to be a responsible tourist and heritage tourism

H3 (null hypothesis): There is no significant difference between preferences to become responsible tourist towards Heritage tourism development in Mahabalipuram.

5. Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic distribution: Tourism industry in India is widely being promoted as a means of monetary development by both governments, the Central and state government of Tamil Nadu, thriving to implement several initiatives in exhibiting the potentials hidden in the tourism sites. The result of hard work initiated through various promotional campaigns such as “Incredible India”, “Mahabalipuram Dance Festival” etc, is attracting many tourists from all over globe to Mahabalipuram in generating funds to the tourism departments. The demographic data for our research is shown in the below .

Table 1.

S.No.	Variable	Respondents	Percent
1	Gender		
	Male	98	52%
	Female	90	47%
2	Age		
	18 – 35	86	46%
	36-54	66	35%
	55 and Above	36	19%
3	Nationality		
	European	102	54%
	American	30	16%
	Australian	22	12%
	Asian	34	18%
4	Educational Qualification		
	School	10	5%
	Diploma	46	24%
	Graduate	54	29%
	Post Graduate	58	31%
	Above PG	20	11%

The above table explicit the gender distribution of our participants, which is pretty even, among the

male and female categories with 52% male 47% female respondents. With regard to the age groups,

it is proven that young tourists are always on the move; age group of 18 to 35 years is 46%, and the tourist in the age group of 36 to 54 years is 35% and the least age group travelers fall in the 55 years and older 19%. It is obvious that most of our respondents (tourists) are from the European countries 54% and second major category is from the Asian countries 18% like Japan and India. Tourists from the United States of America 16%, whereas 12% of the respondents are from Australia. Analysis on the Education of our respondents seems quite interesting; almost majority 31% of the tourists were Post Graduates, 29% of the tourists were Graduates, 24% of tourists respondents hold Diploma and almost 11% of the remaining respondents were Post graduate, and finally 5% of the respondents had only a Higher secondary school education. No tourist in this study belong to the primary level or below. The annual household income of the respondents (tourists) is even more interesting to analyze. The largest group included those with an annual household income of US\$ 7,000 and above (56%), followed by US\$ 1,300 – 5,000 (43%) and

none of the tourists' respondents visiting Mahabalipuram earning less than US\$ 1,000/- per annum.

Tourist behavior: The travel behavior feature of our respondents is displayed in the below Table 2. The period of tour is one of the most important milestones for tourism promotion of any country. The long duration stay of foreign tourists in India increases the foreign exchange earnings through tourism. The study reveals that majority (36%) of the tourists stayed between 2 to 3 days. While 29% of the tourists extend their stay up to 15 days, about 22% of the respondents stayed from 8 to 15 days and the rest 14% of the respondents stayed in Mamallapuram from 3 days to 7 days. This differential in the result prove very well that Mamallapuram is capable of entertaining and accommodating both short and long duration stay. Duration of stay differs depending upon the number of destinations visited in and around Mamallapuram. Quality of service and attraction in the destination may be the other factors for long staying in the destinations.

Tourist Travel Behavior - Table 2

S.No.	Variable	Frequency	Percent
1	Period of Tour		
	2 days to 3 days	68	36%
	3 days to 7 days	26	14%
	8 days to 15 days	40	21%
	More than 15 days	54	29%
2	Tour type		
	Self Tour (by own)	156	83%
	Package Tour (in teams)	32	17%
3	Accommodation Type		
	Guest House	42	22%
	Budget Category	36	19%
	Star Category	36	19%
	Economy Hotel	32	17%
	Beach Resort	24	13%
	Friends & Relatives House	14	7%
	Govt. Hotels	4	2%
4	Travel Accompanying person		

Friends	58	31%
Family	40	21%
Partner	56	30%
Alone	34	18%

With regard to the tour type, majority of the respondents (83%) travel on their own (self tour) and the remaining 17% of the respondents travel in teams with their peers, through tour packages. In the category of “accommodation type” maximum number of the tourists accommodated themselves in guest houses (22%), while the very tourists stayed in government hotels, to save on their budgets. This statistical analysis proves that maximum travelers prefer budgeted tours rather than luxurious and planned itinerary involving cost consuming hotels and resorts for accommodation. While analyzing the tourists group size, maximum count 52% of the respondents prefer to travel along with family members and friends only, followed by 30% of the respondents travelled along with their living in

relationship partners and remaining 18% of the respondents travel alone.

Analysis of Tourist Satisfaction Score with Travel Tourist Destination Attributes (H1)

One- Way ANOVA test is performed for identifying the first hypothesis in Table 3 below, showing the test results, proving that there is no significant difference between tourists satisfaction and travel destination facilities (good accommodation, food quality, transport availability, sufficient shopping facilities, and kindness of local natives). The test results of the attributes of destination facilities with respect to overall tourist satisfaction score (dependent variable) are displayed below:

Table 3: Statistical Analysis of the dependent Variables (F-test)

Destination Attributes (Independent Variable)	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta Square
Good Accommodation	5.972	4	1.493	4.334	0	0.162574
Food Quality	5.451	3	1.817	5.228	0	0.148391
Transport Availability	10.662	4	2.666	9.098	0	0.290249
Sufficient Shopping facilities	11.635	4	2.909	10.325	0	0.316737
Kindliness of Local Natives	9.523	4	2.381	7.787	0	0.259242

While investigating the “good accommodation” facilities in the travel destination, shows a significant difference in overall satisfaction from the tourists, the calculated value of F (4.334) for accommodation facilities is larger than the critical value, we conclude that there exists a significance difference between overall satisfaction and good accommodation facilities. The probability value for Food quality is 0.002 ($p < 0.005$), as a result of which it is concluded that Food quality plays an important role in overall tourists satisfaction. Since the probability value of Transport availability is 0.000 ($p < 0.005$), hence it is concluded that there

exists a significant difference between overall tourist satisfaction and Transport availability at the tourist destination, $F(4, 89) = 9.098$, $p < 0.005$. The calculated value of $F(4, 89) = 10.325$ for Sufficient Shopping Facilities is greater than the critical value, it is confirmed that Sufficient Shopping Facilities play an important role in overall tourist satisfaction in Mahabalipuram. Finally on analyzing the Kindliness of the Local natives at the travel destination, there exists a significant difference in overall tourists satisfaction, the calculated probability value is 0.000 ($p < 0.005$), hence it is concluded that Kindliness of the Local

natives certainly have a significant impact on the overall tourist satisfaction. Since the probability value of all the destination amenities attributes is $p < 0.005$, null hypothesis H_0 is rejected and it is proved that there exists a certain significant difference between overall tourist satisfaction and available amenities at the tourist destinations.

Preference to become responsible tourist and heritage tourism Indicators (H2)

Table 4 shows the test results of One- Way ANOVA for identifying the second hypothesis, there is no significant difference exists between preference to be a responsible tourist and heritage tourism indicators such as eco-friendly rooms, mode of transport, switching over to heritage tourism site to maintain nativity, local produce merchandise. The test results of the attributes of heritage tourism indicators with respect to the preference score to act as responsible tourist (dependent variable) are as follows.

Table 4: Statistical Significance of the Variables (F-test)

Sustainable Tourism Indicators (Independent Variable)	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta Square
Eco-friendly Rooms	3.715	3	1.205	1.989	0.12	0.0621
Mode of transport	6.987	2	3.443	6.11	0.003	0.11831
Heritage tourism to maintain nativity	17.43	4	4.383	9.57	0.000	0.30114
Local produce merchandise	6.852	2	3.421	6.07	0.	0.11753

While investigative whether or not staying in Eco-friendly rooms showed a drastic significant difference in preference to adopt to heritage tourism, the calculated value of F (1.989) for accommodation facilities is smaller than the critical value, and therefore we wind up saying that there is no significant difference between preference to act as heritage tourist and staying in Eco-friendly rooms. This very well proves that the tourists are conscious of hotels use it as a business strategy and therefore they are not satisfied with its attributes. The probability value for Mode of transport is 0.003 ($p < 0.005$), therefore it is decided that Mode of transport plays a significant role in the act of Heritage tourism. Since the probability value of Heritage tourism to maintain nativity tourism spot is 0.000 ($p < 0.005$), hence it is confirmed that there exists a significant difference between Heritage tourism to maintain nativity tourism site, $F(4, 89) = 9.57$, $p < 0.005$. Finally the calculated value of $F(2, 91) = 6.071$ for Local produce merchandise is

greater than the critical value, it is confirmed that Local produce merchandise by local people played a significant role in the preference to act as heritage tourists in Mahabalipuram. Since the probability value of heritage tourism indicators is significant except eco-friendly rooms, null hypothesis H_0 is rejected and therefore it is confirmed that there exists a significant difference between preference to be a responsible tourist and heritage tourism in the sustainable tourism indicators.

Preference to become responsible tourist and heritage tourism development in Mahabalipuram. (H3)

The below *Table 5* represents the Two-Way ANOVA for testing the third hypothesis, displaying the test results that there is no existence of significant difference between Preference to become responsible tourist and heritage tourism development in Mahabalipuram. The test results of

the responsible tourism attributes Responsible Tourist always thinks of tourism destinations to be sustained forever for other tourists and future generations proposing to visit these tourism sites (dependent variable) are given with the tables

between-subjects Factors and Tests of Effects Between Subjects which IS obtained at the output of Two- way ANOVA test.

Table 5: Statistical Significance of the Variables Between-Subjects Factors

(Two way ANOVA Test)

		Value	N
Responsible Tourist always thinks of tourism destinations to be sustained forever for other tourists and future generations proposing to visit these tourism sites	1	Strongly	4
	2	Disagree	4
	3	Neutral	20
	4	Agree	40
	5	Strongly Agree	120
I prefer to visit a Heritage tourism site being involved in and stimulated by the folklore, visual arts, and native culture	1	Strongly Disagree	0
	2	Disagree	0
	3	Neutral	38
	4	Agree	70
	5	Strongly Agree	80

Table 6: Test Effects between the Subjects

	(Dependent Variable): Prefer to become Responsible Tourist				
Source	Sum of Squares	D F	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Contemporary Model	23.932a	10	2.393	5.794	0
Interrupt	510.894	1	510.894	1236.9	0
To sustain the Destination	11.716	4	2.929	7.082	0
Advantageous usage	1.373	2	0.686	1.762	0.196
Sustain the Destination * Advantageous usage	7.354	4	1.838	4.352	0.003
Error	34.281	83	0.413	-	-
Total	1864	94	-	-	-
Corrected Total	58.213	93	-	-	-

(a. R Squared=.411 (Adjusted R Squared=.339)

The F-statistic corresponding to the tourists' perception towards sustaining the tourist Destination is 7.082 which are significant at $p < 0.005$. F-Statistic for preference to Advantageous usage is 1.762, which is insignificant as $p = 0.196$. The relationship between sustaining the tourist destination and Advantageous usage of resources is significant at $p < 0.005$ ($F(4,83) = 4.352$). Hence null hypothesis is partially supported and leads to the conclusion that the tourists' preference to be a responsible tourist has a significant impact on the sustaining the destination where as preference to visit and entertain resources at the heritage tourism destination does not exist.

6. Conclusion

Following to UNESCO's announcement on monuments at "Mahabalipuram" as the World Heritage Site, its prospective and potentials were well propagated to the outside world with several promotional movements and advertising. Before the Covid-19 pandemic huge number of tourists visited Mamallapuram for various purposes, to know the cultural heritage of Tamil Nadu, for leisure, education and business etc., Unfortunately, after the pandemic and subsequent curfew situations implemented all over the globe, the tourism industry encountered a huge loss in terms of revenue and losing their existing market and Mamallapuram is not exceptional to this blackout. We conducted this research during April 2022, enabled us to collect data without any disruption as all the pandemic curfew has been lifted and the situation is eased. Information about the heritage tourist destination Mamallapuram was disseminated through means of communication, Internet, magazines, media, and newspaper. Mahabalipuram satisfies the prerequisite of several kinds of tourists based on their affordability and need with the existence of huge categories of accommodation available here starting from Five star category hotels to economy hotels, budget hotels and guest houses, backpackers inn and so on located in and around the destination. Several kinds of cuisine served at restaurants, hotels, resorts etc., also make the tourist happy and fulfill their choices of interest for different types of foodstuff. The native

residents of Mahabalipuram extend great support to the tourism industry that gives tourists a remarkable memory and make them enjoy at the destination. The condition of East Coast Road (ECR) is excellent and all the hotels and restaurants have enough parking spaces with reasonable parking charges. Local buses in the ECR ply frequently for commuters which makes the tourists of Mahabalipuram satisfied with the mode of transport. However a few backpackers and budget tourists complaint on less public transport facility from the ECR (Mahabalipuram entrance) to Mahabalipuram Bus stand. Thus increasing public transport commuting will reduce the number of private transport and car/vehicle users. The survey conducted among the tourists' for this study very well proved that overall tourists and visitors are satisfied with the accommodation facilities, quality of food served in the hotels/resorts and restaurants, kindness native residents and plenty of shopping facilities and local produces available at the destination.

While analyzing on the aspects of tourists' interest towards Heritage Tourism in Mahabalipuram, the majority crowd of the tourists visiting Mahabalipuram wish to contribute towards Heritage tourism that can be considered by their preference to switch over to nearby optional tourism spot in order to sustain and uphold the capacity of the existing tourist destinations. In addition to that their desire to purchase natively produced merchandise to ensure the economy generated through tourism should be enjoyed by the local people and that will enhance comprehensive growth in and around Mahabalipuram. As majority of our respondents (56.4%) travel by public mode of transport, instead of using their personal transport preferred to authenticate their interest to adopt as responsible tourists, thus curtailing carbon emissions and will pave the way for heritage tourism development in Mahabalipuram.

This study further confirm the perception of tourists towards sustaining the tourist destination and makes a responsible tourist always thinks of tourism destinations to be sustained forever for other tourists and future generations proposing to visit these tourism sites promoting tourism

development in Mahabalipuram. Certainly, we feel proud in housing one of the renowned destination Mahabalipuram in our state, attracts large number of tourist to Tamilnadu throughout the year and also highlights the need to ensure, practices and stimulate the folklore, visual arts, and native culture engraved in the rocks and stones pompously standing for thousands of years here.

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