

Guidelines for Development of Accommodations Business for Foreign Tourists to Support the Thai Tourism Industry in the Digital Age

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Abstract: - This research aimed to study the development of a structural equation model for the accommodation business for foreign tourists, to support the Thai tourism industry in the digital age. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used. Quantitative data was collected using questionnaires from 500 entrepreneurs or executives responsible for accommodation businesses in Thailand. Descriptive statistics, reference statistics, and multiple statistics were used for data analysis. The results showed that the guidelines for the development of accommodation businesses for foreign tourists, in order of priority, are: 1) marketing communication ($\bar{X} = 4.31$), 2) service quality ($\bar{X} = 4.30$), 3) innovation and technology ($\bar{X} = 4.28$), and 4) business network ($\bar{X} = 4.24$). The hypothesis testing results indicated that resort and hotel businesses pay attention to the development of accommodation businesses for foreign tourists and that the difference was statistically significant at 0.05. The analysis of the developed structural equation model passed the evaluation criteria and was consistent with the empirical data. The probability of chi-squared was 0.144, the relative chi-squared was 1.118, the corresponding index was 0.965, and the root mean squared error was 0.015.

Key-Words: - Guidelines for developing accommodation business, Foreign tourists, Hotels, Resorts, Structural Equation Model

Received: April 23, 2023. Revised: July 21, 2023. Accepted: July 27, 2023. Published: August 4, 2023.

1 Introduction

The tourism industry is an important economic force that has driven Thailand for many generations. The government of Thailand has given great importance to this industry by setting up an action plan to promote tourism in 2021. The goal is for Thailand to earn income from foreign tourists which is 1 in 5 of the world's total. The plan aims to increase capacity to ensure safety and security while maintaining a balance between the economy, society, and environment through responsible tourism. The goal is for Thailand to become a top-quality tourist destination that grows in equilibrium based on Thai identity. This will promote socio-economic development and distribute income sustainably across all sectors, [1].

The tourism industry consists of various businesses that are generated by tourism. The Tourism Business and Guide Act defines these

businesses to include accommodation, transportation, souvenir, food and beverage, travel, and other types of tourism businesses, according to information from the Ministry of Tourism and Sports. It has been found that the accommodation business generated the most income from the tourism industry between 2017 and 2021, and this trend continues to grow. The number of income from foreign tourists who traveled to Thailand during the year 2017-2021 is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Numbers of income from foreign tourists who traveled to Thailand during the year 2017-2021, (unit = million bath/person), [2].

Lists	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of foreign tourists	35.59	38.27	39.91	4.82	0.62
1. Purchasing goods and souvenirs	451,069	455,597	464,569	29,397	2,467
Lists	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
2. Entertainment	170,416	170,727	172,678	10,924	916
3. Travel Service	70,827	72,215	74,478	4,718	395
4. Accommodation	527,092	534,488	544,495	34,454	2,891
5. Food and Beverage	376,131	396,595	404,587	25,598	2,148
6. Vehicle for traveling	179,450	183,806	186,532	11,807	990
7. Medical treatment	27,229	32,222	35,078	2,213	185
8. Miscellaneous	28,887	30,482	29,388	1,863	156

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a decrease in tourism around the world, including in Thailand. This led to a reduction in the number of foreign tourists to 4,822,513 people, and in 2021, there were only 625,362 people, resulting in less income from the tourism industry as well. The TTB Economic Analysis Center assessed the impact of 2021 on the income structure of foreign tourists and Thai people and found that the most affected businesses were accommodations, which decreased by 880 billion baht. The Bank of Thailand reported on the impact and resilience of accommodation business entrepreneurs in a survey, [3]. The survey was analyzed from the outside-in theory of [4], which examines the effects of COVID-19 on tourism, readiness skills, and business strategies.

Therefore, the researcher was interested in studying the guidelines for the development of accommodation businesses for foreign tourists to support the Thai tourism industry in the digital age. The aim was to prepare for adjusting to the changes in the management of accommodation businesses and responding to the needs of foreign tourists in the era of digital transformation and changing consumer behavior. This includes preparing for the current situation and future needs, to create confidence with foreign tourists by providing high-quality services and meeting their expectations.

1.1 Research Objectives

- 1) To study the components of accommodation business development guidelines for foreign tourists to support the Thai tourism industry in the digital age.
- 2) To develop a structural equation model for the development of the accommodation business for

foreign tourists to support the Thai tourism industry in the digital age.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Concepts and Theories Related to Service Quality

According to [5], the nature of services has been divided into many perspectives, and can be characterized by four key aspects: 1) Intangibility, meaning that services are abstract, impersonal, formless, and cannot be touched, making every experience gained from the service important; 2) Inseparability, which refers to the fact that the production and consumption of service cannot be separated from the provider, as the customer physically participates in the consumption of the service; 3) Variability/Heterogeneity, which suggests that services have a variety of characteristics that differ between service providers and customers; and 4) Perishability, which means that services cannot be stored, saved, returned, or resold once they have been used, and can only be delivered to one customer at a time. However, services can be stored in the form of inventory like general merchandise, causing the hotel to lose the opportunity to sell services if there are no visitors to use them. According to, [6], managing service quality in organizations should consider the expectations of consumers, measure the level of expectations from the target customer group, and strive to maintain service quality that exceeds the level of consumer expectations.

According to, [7], they introduced elements to enhance the SERVQUAL (Service Quality) tools by identifying 10 service quality assessment factors and consolidating them into 5 dimensions to gain a better understanding of the true meaning of service quality in the service industry. The fundamental factors that customers used to judge the quality of service have been developed and are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The fundamental factors that customers used to judge the quality of service have been developed, [8].

Criteria	Definitions
1. Tangibles	Tangibles of the physical appearance of facilities, including equipment, staff, and various communication tools.
2. Reliability	It is a process of providing services with honesty, and correctness, completely from the first step.
Criteria	Definitions
3. Responsiveness	Expression of willingness and readiness to provide immediate service to the customers.
4. Assurance	What makes customers feel confident in the service provider is that they have knowledge and understanding about service and have the ability to provide services.
5. Empathy	Have the willingness to help customers with fast service.

2.2 Concepts and Theories Related to Marketing Communication

According to, [9], the marketing mix from the customer's point of view consists of the following factors: 1) Customer Value, which refers to the benefits received in comparison to the money spent. 2) Cost to the Customer, which is the value of goods or services expected in the product. 3) Convenience, which involves facilitating easy access to information and products. 4) Communication, which includes providing appropriate channels for businesses to share news, opinions, or complaints. 5) Caring, which requires service providers to show great care to customers at all times. 6) Comfort, which relates to creating a comfortable and peaceful service environment for customers. 7) Completeness, which ensures that the customer's expectations are fully met and that there are no defects.

According to, [10], when products meet the needs of target customers and are sold at an acceptable price, consumers are willing to pay because they consider it worthwhile. Purchasing behavior is facilitated by trying to motivate customers to be inclined to the product and behave accordingly. The marketing mix includes the product,

price, place, promotion, people, physical evidence and presentation, and process, all of which are designed and responded to from the customer's point of view, such as customer solutions, convenience, communication, and cost.

2.3 Concepts and Theories Related to Business Networking

According to, [11], a network is regarded as a means of communication as well as a tool for exchanging information through various mediums, such as television, radio, and electronic mail. However, different players who have joined forces within the network may be at the same or different levels. Forms of cooperative networks can be divided into five categories as follows: 1) A centralized network without any data exchange with a central organization. 2) A centralized network with data exchange with a central organization. 3) A centralized network with a network between each other. 4) A theoretically perfect network. 5) A decentralized network.

Models of collaborative management consider two interacting dimensions: the level of collaborative activity and the collaborative strategy. The relationship and connection between these dimensions lead to various forms of cooperative management, including the Jurisdiction-Based Management Model, Abstinence Model, Top-Down Model, and Reactive Model, [12]. Challenges and problems are inevitable in cooperative networks, such as unclear or inconsistent objectives, member inequality, the presence of different types of members, domination, centralization and clinging to hardened systems, failed communication and information, funding intervention, incomplete information, lack of competency, etc., [13].

2.4 Concepts and Theories Related to Innovation and Technology

Innovation is the creation of something new (invention), making something that already exists into something new but cannot be replaced in all cases, [14]. The beginning of innovation is initiated by the ability to use knowledge, creativity, skills, specialization, and experience to turn ideas into tangible products, new processes, or services through inventing new things where science and technology play an important role. On the other hand, innovation is the result of bringing inventions to commercial applications to increase the value of the market or organization, [15]. Scholars view innovation as not

only about products and processes but also innovations in other areas. Another group of countries for economic and development cooperation, [16], is classified into four main categories: 1) Product or Service Innovation, 2) Process Innovation, 3) Marketing Innovation, and 4) Organizational Innovation. This understanding and new knowledge of innovation is related to behavior and can be used as a guideline for innovation management in the organization to improve work efficiency and promote competitiveness. It involves applying the knowledge gained from research to selecting people to work, training employees to create innovative behavior, creating an atmosphere in working, organizing work groups, and setting up a working environment suitable for the emergence of innovations, value delivery innovation, and e-commerce. The key person in the implementation and involvement are delivery service providers who will greatly increase customer demand and shipping volume in response to e-retailers and shipping carriers, [17]. According to [18], business organizations that want to rely on advanced technology must have an integration of knowledge to create innovative sustainability. Organizations must consist of an innovation capability factor and a marketing capability factor.

The characteristics of technology, [19], can be classified into process, product, or process and product. Innovation is always coupled with technology to bring change for the better. This may be at the stage of proposing ideas or in the stage of experimentation that is not yet familiar to society. As for technology, it focuses on bringing things, including methods to apply to work or solve problems more effectively.

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Composition Synthesis

According to all concepts and theories, the guidelines for developing accommodation business for foreign tourists to support the Thai tourism industry in the digital age can be summarized into 4 components, which are: Service Quality, Marketing Communication, Business Networking, and Innovation and Technology as shown in Figure 1.



Fig. 1: Conceptual framework

3.2 Population and Sample

The population used in this study was determined to be entrepreneurs or executives who are responsible for the hotels and resorts business. Random samples were taken from representatives of 6 regions of Thailand such as the North, the Northeastern, the West, the Central, the East, and the South, comprising 5,183 samples that are engaged in the accommodation business according to the Thailand Industrial Standard Classification, TISC2009, [20].

The sample size was determined using the criteria for research on elemental analysis or structural equation modeling, where a sample size of 500 was determined to be at a very good level. [21], used a multi-stage sampling approach, [22], consisting of cluster sampling and systematic sampling. Data were collected by using the sample group from each type of industry calculated according to the proportion of the number of two groups of accommodation businesses, the hotel business group, and the resort business group.

3.3 Research Tools

Rating scale questionnaires were used as a research tool, in which responders specify their level of agreement to a statement, typically in five points, according to Likert Scale Analysis, [23]. The researcher brought the drafted questionnaire, which was created together with the assessment form, to five experts who have knowledge and experience in the study area to find the quality of the tools by examining the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). The results of checking the IOC showed a value between 0.60-1.00, where the appropriate value is 0.50 or more, [24]. Then, the researcher used the questionnaire to try out with 30 people who were in a group of populations that was similar to the population that the researcher would like to study and analyzed discrimination in a part of the questions that looked like a checklist form and questions that looked like an estimation scale by analyzing the standard deviation and correlation coefficient,

respectively, to find the reliability of the questionnaire. The discrimination was between 0.49-1.35, and the reliability of the whole questionnaire was 0.98, which was considered to be a very good level of confidence, [25]. Then, the tool was used to collect data by asking for the courtesy of answering questionnaires from the sample group.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics with the SPSS program. The statistics were obtained using the SPSS package program. Multistatistical analysis and development of a structural equation model were performed using the AMOS package. Four criteria were used to evaluate the data-model fit: 1) Chi-squared probability greater than 0.05, 2) Relative chi-square less than 2.00, 3) Goodness of fit index more than 0.90, and 4) Root mean square error of approximation less than 0.08. The root mean square error of estimation was less than 0.08, [26].

4 Results

The level of importance of the components of the development of the accommodation business for foreign tourists to support the Thai tourism industry in the digital age revealed that

1) Results of the analysis of service quality components it was found that overall, the average was at a high level ($\bar{X} = 4.30$), considering item by item, the result showed that creating flexible service standards to suit current and future situations such as SHA standard, the average is at a high level ($\bar{X} = 4.37$).

2) Results of the analysis of marketing communication components revealed that overall, the average was at a high level ($\bar{X} = 4.31$), considering item by item, the result showed that directly communicating information to target customers Offline, the average is at a high level ($\bar{X} = 4.37$).

3) Results of the analysis of the business network, this proposed overall, the average was at a high level ($\bar{X} = 4.24$) and when considering item by item, it was found the cooperation with The Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau for MICE Business ($\bar{X} = 4.34$).

4) Results of the analysis of innovation and technology, it was found that the average was at a high level ($\bar{X} = 4.28$) and when considering item by

item, it was found that research by submitting questionnaires online and collecting information on customer needs, the average is at a high level ($\bar{X} = 4.36$).

5) The researcher has improved the model by considering the Modification Indices obtained from the packaged program with theoretical academic principles to exclude some of the unsuitable observational variables one by one and then proceed to reprocess the model. Do this until the model has all 4 statistical values that pass the criterion. After the model has been improved, it is found that

The objective of this study is to examine the components of accommodation business development guidelines for foreign tourists to support the Thai tourism industry in the digital age. The four components considered are service quality, marketing communication, networking of business, and innovation and technology. All four components were derived from a review of relevant literature and the empirical data showed consistency with a p-value of 0.144, CMIN/DF of 1.118, GFI of 0.965, and RMSEA of 0.015. Therefore, it can be concluded that the structural equation model is consistent with both literature and empirical data and has passed the specified criteria as shown in Figure 2 and Table 3.

Table 3. Observational variables

Abbreviation	Description
Service Quality	
SQ15	Delivering special services beyond expectations to the customers.
SQ18	Variables for providing information to employees about business-related applications.
SQ21	Variants have effective security systems both inside and outside the rooms.
SQ22	Area adjustment / Equipment of the room according to the customer's needs from the survey.
SQ24	Creating flexible service standards to suit current and future situations such as SHA standards.
Marketing Communication	
MC11	Promote and communicate the marketing activities of the accommodation business to build relationships with customers.
MC12	The property communicates in the form of VR (Virtual Reality), a 360-degree simulation of virtual images.
MC17	Enhancing the brand by creating value for the brand (Brand Equity).
MC18	Communicating the way of life of people in the community that reflects the distinctive identity of the area.
MC20	Submitting information to Trip Advisor for activity reviews. / Accommodation services.
Business Networking	
BN7	Creating a good business relationship with suppliers who deliver goods for future agreements.
BN9	Creating good relationships with financial institutions.
BN11	Creating good relationships with venture capitalists and business partners.
BN13	Creating relationships with accommodation business auditors.
BN24	Participating with the domestic accommodation business network.
Innovation and Technology	
IT5	Organizing service innovation concept contests of personnel who are different from customers.
IT12	Employing innovation and technology development experts to develop the system of accommodation.
IT16	Defining the level of secrecy to access sensitive information within the organization.
IT19	Implementing an ERP system to manage the resources of the organization.
IT22	Wristbands for guests to use for access and payment scans.

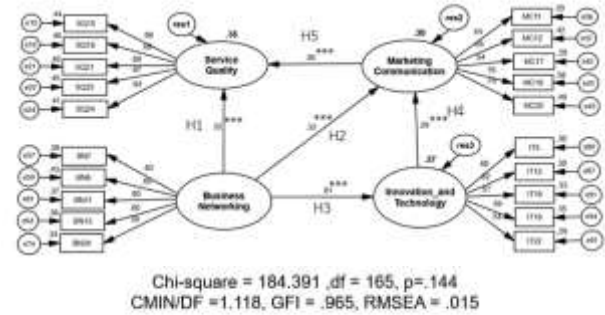


Fig. 2: Structural equation modeling

Figure 2 shows the analysis of the overall influence of latent variables in the structural equation model, the business development guidelines for foreign tourists to support the Thai tourism industry in the digital age in Standardized Estate mode after model improvements. The model consists of four latent variables, one exogenous latent variable (Business networking), and three endogenous latent variables (Service quality, marketing communication, and innovation and technology). The highest overall influence is on the business network components Direct and overall influence on innovation and technology with a weight value (Standardized Region Weight) equal to 0.61.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the research using descriptive statistics and a structural equation model can be concluded:

5.1 Business Networking Component

1) Business networking directly influences the component of service quality, which was statistically significant at the 0.001 level. The influence line weight was 0.32, indicating that good services promote and increase value for consumers. It brings clarity and creative thinking to promote good service to customers as well as profitability. This is in line with the research of [27], who studied the importance of increasing managerial capacities to enable profit-seeking. This is relevant to the current research, as it emphasizes the need to increase the capacity of management to pursue profit. The creation of a network is essential for businesses to expand gradually, and it is an important tool to increase the potential of a good network between hotel businesses. [28], concluded that the survival of hotel businesses requires consideration of competitive

violence, including competition between similar entities, and developing methods or strategies to meet the needs and satisfaction of customers. This process includes creating a commercial alliance to connect and combine networks with similar business types. This corresponds to the findings of [29], who state that entrepreneurs should pay attention to all dimensions. Hotel business operators should build network strategy potential to achieve good management performance, as suggested by [30], who emphasizes the importance of business relations in recognizing awareness for alliance relationships and support for commercial networks and information sharing to survive the impact of viability and overcome competition in the expanding business environment.

2) Business networking elements directly influence the elements of marketing communication, with a statistically significant influence line weight of 0.33. This corresponds [31], which modeled brand value through consumers for multinational hotel brands expanding globally amidst booming international travel. Their study developed a consumer brand equity model for such brands, testing it on a sample of middle-class Chinese consumers at three multinational US hotels, both in their home country and abroad. Results showed different patterns of correlation between brand awareness responses and consumers in the country and host country. However, this study only examined the role of Chinese consumers' motivation to travel to the United States of America in a consumer-based brand value model.

3) Business network components (Business Networking) Direct influence on innovation and technology components (Innovation and Technology) Statistical significance at the level of 0.001 with the influence line weight of 0.61. From research on value-added business, 3-star hotels in Thailand 4.0, this complies with the research of [32], which said that entrepreneurs must formulate strategies for success, so it is important. In this regard, the implementation of the indigo waters strategy comes to integrate and apply to develop effective services, consisting of 1) creating value-added 2) increasing the offer 3) The ability to reduce costs by eliminating things that cannot add value and 4) reducing costs from cost reductions. However, what must be emphasized together with strategy determination is factors that affect the successful stepping into the 3-

star hotel industry in the 4.0 era including defining organizational strategies and clear goals, creating knowledge for the organization along with improving the working culture within the organization, must adapt to become an expert in data analytics (Data Analytics) in all areas of work within the organization, adjust the organization to become a Digital Enterprise with a stable and clear vision and plan to prepare to reach the business ecosystem allows products or services to work with other corporate systems to become effective solutions that can meet customer needs. These are guidelines for creating added value for industrial businesses. [33], Entrepreneurs have focused on setting a common vision throughout the organization and having flexible management for employees.

5.2 Innovation and Technology Component

The Innovation and Technology component directly influences the Marketing Communication component at a statistically significant level of 0.001 with an influence line weight of 0.29. The research article on Hotel business in Bangkok with the use of information technology for marketing and promotion is consistent with the research of [34], who stated that hotel business organizations should develop modern information technology systems to meet the needs of customers and provide them with convenience while speeding up the sales process of the hotel business in the future. In addition, the service system must have a data error prevention system to provide accurate customer service, which will build credibility for customers who use the service, especially in terms of payment services through the bank, where good and accurate data security systems are essential. Hotel operators should provide sufficient payment channels to offer an alternative method of payment that is convenient for each tourist through the use of modern technology and data security. [35], found that information is current data that can process transactions with accuracy, up-to-date situations, and credibility.

5.3 Marketing Communication Component

The marketing communication elements directly influence the service quality component at the statistical significance level of 0.001 with the weight of the influence line being 0.36. The guidelines for the development of service models in the hotel business for retired foreign tourists are related to the research, [36]. They proposed that for the service

model approach in the hotel and tourism business for retired foreign tourists, entrepreneurs must understand the nature of the need for services from this group of customers who need psychological services rather than physical ones. Therefore, the form of service must reflect attentiveness by building trust and adopting Thai culture consisting of Thai etiquette, and traditions that are classified as the nature of service. This results in satisfaction with services and the likelihood of tourists returning, creating sustainability in the hotel and tourism business. [37], found that foreign tourists prefer social cultures unique to the local area, rare ways of life and traditions, and a variety of food. According to [38], the acceptable guideline is to expand the business step by step with clear objectives and indicators for applying digital technology to marketing. Additionally, it is essential to share or pass down new technology to the members thoroughly and ethically while providing services to customers with honesty.

5.4 Importance of the Components

The importance of the components of the development of the accommodation business for foreign tourists to support the Thai tourism industry. Overall, when classified by type of business, they are different. Statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Resort-type businesses pay more attention to the development of accommodations for foreign tourists to support the Thai tourism industry than the hotel business type. In terms of quality, and business services, the resort category focuses on creating new skills necessary to work for personnel in accordance with their needs (Reskill) and Encouraging attitude (Attitude) to personnel to have a love for service. Have a love for the organization and colleagues, think positively, and have a volunteer spirit. Promote knowledge of negotiations (Negotiation), promote ethics in service work, giving customers feedback to suggest opinions in many channels. Listening to opinions, there are activities to encourage all employees to be courteous in providing service politely and have a service mind to promote visual, vocal, and verbal that creates an atmosphere and provides positive and consistent services to customers. Increasing the speed and accuracy in Check-in/Check-out and having the policy develop into high-quality accommodation in accordance with the research of [39], about service quality, tangibles, reliability, responding to service recipients

(Responsiveness), giving confidence to service recipients (Assurance), and understanding customers (Empathy) resulting in returning to use the service again. This is also consistent with [40], The results showed that quality internal services resulted in them providing quality services to external clients. Quality internal service will result in providing quality service to external customers.

6 Suggestions

1) Hotel and accommodation businesses include hotels owned by Thai investors and international hotel chains from abroad. International hotel chains have expertise in marketing strategies to expand their business and investment expansion by focusing on meeting customer needs, as well as the ability to transform business management to meet the needs of foreign tourists in the age of emerging business models, platforms, and innovations (Digital Disruption). Business development or organizational management approaches are gradual. It is an interesting issue to study the success factors of medium and small-sized accommodations for accommodating foreign tourists.

2) Currently, changes in tourist behavior directly affect the target groups of foreign tourists who prefer to travel independently, especially foreign individual tourists who prioritize high privacy. This type of tourism allows tourists to manage their travel plans every step of the way, providing them with an opportunity to fully immerse themselves in the culture and get to know the local people. All hotels and resorts must prepare to cope with this new type of tourism and adapt their marketing communications to the digital age through a modern platform to reach the target group that is rapidly growing and creates a strategy for sustainable growth in the accommodation business.

3) In the situation of the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), accommodation businesses should focus on strategic transformation by enhancing the level of sanitation measures, and service standards, and providing safety services for both ourselves and our customers. They should analyze customer behavior during the epidemic situation to understand customer needs and plan and offer products and services that meet the changing needs of customers. They should also explore marketing media that can leverage technology and social media to respond to the behavior of modern

consumers who want to use technology and other innovations linked to the internet. Differentiating products and services and presenting the distinctiveness of the business to the service recipients can help achieve maximum satisfaction.

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Contribution of Individual Authors to the Creation of a Scientific Article (Ghostwriting Policy)

- Prahuschai Ramart carried out the conceptualization, methodology, project admistration, resources, visualization, writing, and editing.
 - Nilawan Sawangrat has implemented the methodology, investigation, and review.
 - Thanin Silpcharu has implemented the methodology, supervision, and review.
- All authors discussed the results and contributed to the manuscript.

Sources of Funding for Research Presented in a Scientific Article or Scientific Article Itself

No funding was received for conducting this study.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare that is relevant to the content of this article.

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