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TOURISM ENTREPRENEURIAL PRACTICES AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES CRAFT-MAKERS IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between tourism entrepreneurial practices and economic empowerment of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Delta State Nigeria. It adopted the survey design method; with the population comprising providers of tourism SMEs in the State. A sample of 209 entrepreneurs was drawn from this population using the cluster sampling technique. Primary data was obtained through the administration of a questionnaire measured on a four point Likert Scale. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) coefficient was used for testing the postulated hypotheses. The findings revealed that the dimensions of entrepreneurial practices had positive and significant relationship with economic empowerment measures. The study concluded that there is need for operators of SMEs to be entrepreneurial so as to enable them achieve success in the competitive business environment. Following the conclusion, it was recommended that SMEs within the craft-making tourism sector in the state should take calculated risks in order to enhance and improve their production abilities. They should anticipate future needs and wants of tourists in order to accommodate growing patronage. They should also develop more entrepreneurial skills and competencies as this will help them adapt to the changing environment.

Keywords:

Innovation, Job Creation, Revenue Generation, Risk-Taking.



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Introduction

The tourism sector ultimately has the potential of providing excellent substitution to the country's revenue and financial gain if small scale entrepreneurs are adequately and economically empowered. In many developing countries, there is an increasing need to train the local people to operate as entrepreneurs in order to raise the tolerance limit of the host community towards tourist's activities and also enhance community stability through empowering local people and giving them a stake in the development of the tourism industry because small scale enterprises have the potency of opening up rich, untapped resources in the country and play a vital role in poverty alleviation (Mshenga, 2010). The beliefs that tourism has the potential to catalyze the economies of developing nations were based on research and empirical evidences and not just political inclination (Rasool, 2021).

However, the Nigeria business environment has remained unpleasant for easy start-up of small businesses and this huddle could pose a serious threat to the emergence of an entrepreneurial economy. Small business entrepreneurs receive little or no attention and support from the government. If nothing is done to solve the problem and the situation continues, it can constitute a menace in the society and lead to poverty hence, empowering communities through tourism becomes an escape route

Economic empowerment refers to the process of enabling people to increase control over their lives (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004). Empowerment refers to the process by which people gain control over the factors and decisions that shape their lives (Okoli, 2001). Economic power is a central concept in community empowerment and health promotion invariably operates within the arena of a power struggle. Community empowerment necessarily addresses the social, cultural, political and economic determinants that underpin health, and seeks to build partnerships with other sectors in finding solutions. Taking intentional actions on tourism to metamorphose into an economic empowerment tool, local communities must start thinking pro-actively, take initiatives and position their cultural products to attract the kind of patronage they desire and engender them to think out of the norm and start taking entrepreneurial initiatives.

The term 'entrepreneurial tourism' merges into two formally distinct disciplines and is used to describe the tourism marketing processes of craft makers pursuing opportunities in uncertain market circumstances often under constrained resources (Koh, 2002). Entrepreneurial tourism is a function and a set of processes for creating, communicating and delivering value to tourists and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the host communities and its tourists who patronize them, and that is characterized by innovation, risk-taking, pro-activeness, competitive aggressiveness (Fadda, 2018)). Tourism entrepreneurial practices have been identified as one of the most important key ingredients for superior performance and global competitiveness (Komppula, 2014). There is a growing evidence to support the idea that over time, destinations that are competitively advantaged are those engaged in entrepreneurial practices.

A study by McManus et al (2008) on facilitated process for improving organizational resilience in business in Spain found that flexibility and adaptability of businesses improves their competitive advantage. The scholars further stated that destinations that display this trait are better placed to compete favorably in the industry.

In a bid to understand the effect of Entrepreneurial marketing on firm's innovative performance in Turkish SMEs, Otika, et al (2019) opined that firms that adopt entrepreneurial marketing plans will gain patronage as the quality of service in terms of time, product originality; customer relationship is

of high level compared to the conventional marketing plans. The scholars further asserted that adaptability is correlated to innovation.

Nienaber et al, (2015) asserted that community economic empowerment contexts have proven that vulnerability is associated with businesses that are not resilient and has failed to adapt to current business environment realities.

These studies have demonstrated that tourism entrepreneurial practices give host communities a competitive edge as it breeds resilience and the decision to survive any crises. Though they have all given appreciable findings, there is limited knowledge in the literature in regards to the correlation between tourism entrepreneurial practices and community empowerment in the tourism sector within the Nigerian context. Consequentially, this has created a gap in the literature that needs to be bridged. This study aims to investigate entrepreneurial practices and community economic empowerment of host communities in Imo state.

Literature Review

Concept of Tourism Entrepreneurial Practices (TEP)

Tourism entrepreneurial practices is defined as effectual action or adaptation of entrepreneurial theory in producing tourism products (Becherer et al., 2006). While some authors argue that it can be described as tourism activities with an entrepreneurial mindset, irrespective of industry size (Kraus et al., 2010), it is widely accepted that the concept is particularly appropriate to the small business context (Jones & Rowley, 2011). According to Bjerke and Hultman (2002), entrepreneurial practice is the marketing of a firms growing through entrepreneurship. As the tourism industry face some limitations due to the pandemic that has ravaged many businesses which has manifested in reduction of visitation, limited resource in business and marketing; entrepreneurial practices become more appropriate for SME's to survive. Kraus et al. (2009) identified two perspectives in definition of entrepreneurial practices. The first one defines entrepreneurial practices as marketing for small or new ventures by emphasizing the quantitative aspect of the venture, and the second one defines entrepreneurial practices as marketing with an entrepreneurial spirit (marketing by entrepreneurs) by highlighting the qualitative aspect of entrepreneurial marketing.

Tourism entrepreneurial practices involve the services and strategies that are available to encourage the growth and development of an enterprise (Moyle & Brent, 2020). Tourism entrepreneurial practices in a broader sense are recognized as basic structures or ingredients which support particularly the full range of entrepreneur's activities that untraveled business opportunities to another side of the regions (Nongsieji & Shimray, 2017). According to Mali (2013), tourism entrepreneurship practices are important drivers for success in the tourism industry; and are major sources of jobs. Tourism entrepreneurial practices are skills, finance and network that enable firms to thrive and meet competitive advantage. Morris et al (2002) conceptualized tourism entrepreneurial practices (TEP) as the identification and exploitation of opportunities for acquiring tourists through innovative approaches to risk management, the leveraging of resources, and the creation of value.

Dimensions of Tourism Entrepreneurial Practices

Risk Taking: Risk-taking has been assumed to reflect individual's beliefs, feelings, and behavioral intentions (Ch, Lee & Jan, 2015). Risk taking has a curvilinear relationship with performance of entrepreneurial firms (Kreiser & Davis, 2010). Research suggests that entrepreneurial firms exhibiting moderate levels of risk-taking perform better in market as compared to firms exhibiting either very

high or very low levels of risk-taking. Studies indicate that factors such as process of forming a risk problem, results of past risk-taking and the ability to perform under-risky conditions affect the risk-taking ability of the entrepreneur. (Lichtenstein & Brush, 2001; Stewart & Roth, 2001; Swierczek & Ha, 2003). Typical elements of risk-taking such as heavy borrowing, committing a large portion of one's assets to a course of action, or action in the face of uncertainty are associated with the risk-return trade off (Hornsby et al 2002).

Innovation: Innovation emerges as a driver of economic growth and prosperity in several countries (Stockdale, 2011). There is no doubt that today, greater reliance is placed on entrepreneurship all over the world for national development, technological innovations, and expanded employment opportunities, than was the case earlier. The reasons for this development only differ slightly from region to region and from country to country (Ottih, 2014). Innovation is a complicated process that frequently demands knowledge and expertise from other economies (Bergenholtz & Waldstrom, 2011). Due to the emergence of unique and powerful digital platforms, technologies, and infrastructures, innovation and entrepreneurship have increasingly become interwoven. However, innovation and entrepreneurship are two distinct phenomena because not all the enterprises are innovative and not all available information leads to a successful entrepreneurship (Malerba & McKelvey, 2020). Therefore, it is necessary that entrepreneurs give greater attention to the innovation process for attaining competitive advantages. Similarly, innovation processes like advanced technologies have a significant impact on the intentions and performance of tourism vloggers. Thus, vloggers can easily offer information on the tourist destination by uploading relevant content on social media sites.

Entrepreneurs are considered highly innovative individuals; this innovativeness can be manifested in many ways. They have the ability to create new ways of doing things. They can easily identify errors or problems in systems and recommend new solutions. They are watchful and alert and can easily isolate business opportunities and think of original or improved products or services to take advantage of such opportunities. These innovative attributes are very important for contemporary entrepreneur (Bergenholtz & Waldstrom, 2011; Malerba & McKelvey, 2020).

Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment in community SMEs is the attempt of helping SMEs to improve their welfare independently. This attempt is not easy but complicated, taking time, needing reliable and professional personnel. For that reasons, economic community empowerment in Delta state communities cannot be done haphazardly, and should be done with mature planning. Economic community empowerment process works adjacently with the development of tourism product centers, as it will help boost local SMEs opportunity to develop, package, advertise and sell their crafts. The measure that should be taken in the attempt of developing a tourist center economically is first to grow consciousness within the community. Growing consciousness, according to Triharjono (1992) is the foundation for empowerment process. Without the consciousness grown from the community, development and empowerment is useless. It is because the community consciousness of changing their fate is the key to a successful development. This consciousness growing is conducted both individually and collectively.

Another measure for economic community empowerment is to provide the facility to open job opportunity. The tour supporting facilities such as parking lot, souvenir market or food stall areas, toilet, small businesses that are very desirable to make the tourists feel secure and comfortable. Those facilities can also be functioned as the place for SMEs job opportunity for the local communities. For

that reason Harno (1993) argued that SMEs trade fairs will help to showcase the cultural beauties of these communities, nevertheless, the hosting of such fairs or events should also be arranged appropriately for monetization.

Measures of Economic Empowerment

Job Creation: Tourism plays a pivotal role in economic development, particularly in job creation, due to its multi-sectoral impact on various industries such as hospitality, transportation, and entertainment. According to Smith (2017), the tourism sector has emerged as a significant contributor to employment generation globally, offering diverse opportunities ranging from entry-level positions to skilled professions. Empirical evidence suggests that tourism-related activities have the potential to create jobs rapidly, especially in regions with rich cultural heritage and natural attractions (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). This is supported by studies such as that of Brida et al. (2012), which found a positive correlation between tourism development and employment growth in destinations like Italy and Spain.

Furthermore, the employment opportunities generated by tourism are often diverse in nature, encompassing both formal and informal sectors of the economy (Dritsakis, 2012). For instance, while the formal sector may include jobs in hotels, tour agencies, and transportation services, the informal sector may involve street vendors, artisans, and performers catering to tourists. This observation is consistent with findings by Jamal and Getz (1995), who argue that tourism-driven employment extends beyond conventional wage-based jobs to include entrepreneurial ventures and self-employment opportunities, particularly in developing countries where informal economies thrive.

However, the relationship between tourism and job creation is not without its challenges and complexities. Some scholars caution against overreliance on tourism for employment generation, citing issues such as seasonality, low wages, and job insecurity (Buckley, 2012). Additionally, the quality of jobs created in the tourism sector varies widely across different destinations, with some regions experiencing a phenomenon known as 'job polarization,' where a significant portion of employment consists of low-skilled, temporary positions (Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2013). Therefore, while tourism can indeed contribute to job creation, policymakers and stakeholders must adopt strategies that ensure the sustainability and inclusivity of employment opportunities in the sector.

Revenue Generation: Tourism is recognized as a significant driver of economic growth and revenue generation for many nations worldwide. Scholars have extensively explored the multifaceted relationship between tourism and revenue generation, examining various dimensions and factors influencing this process. One key aspect highlighted in the literature is the economic impact of tourism, which encompasses direct, indirect, and induced effects on local economies (Dritsakis, 2012). Direct effects include expenditures by tourists on accommodation, transportation, and attractions, while indirect effects stem from the supply chain linkages with other industries such as agriculture, manufacturing, and services. Induced effects refer to the multiplier effect generated by increased household income and spending within the destination community (Sofield & Li, 2011). These economic linkages underscore the importance of tourism as a revenue-generating sector with the potential to stimulate broader economic development.

Moreover, scholars have examined the role of destination attributes and marketing strategies in enhancing revenue generation through tourism. Destination competitiveness, characterized by factors such as natural attractions, cultural heritage, infrastructure, and hospitality services, plays a crucial role in attracting tourists and maximizing revenue (Enright & Newton, 2004). Effective destination marketing strategies, including branding, promotion, and digital marketing initiatives, are essential for positioning destinations competitively in the global tourism market (Pike, 2004). Additionally, the emergence of niche tourism segments such as ecotourism, adventure tourism, and medical tourism has

provided destinations with opportunities to diversify their tourism offerings and capture niche market segments, thereby increasing revenue streams (Hall, 2010).

Furthermore, the literature emphasizes the significance of sustainable tourism development in ensuring long-term revenue generation and socio-economic benefits. Sustainable tourism practices, including environmental conservation, community involvement, and cultural preservation, are essential for mitigating negative impacts such as environmental degradation, cultural commodification, and social disintegration (Dallen & Boyd, 2012). Sustainable tourism not only preserves the natural and cultural assets that attract tourists but also fosters destination competitiveness and enhances the quality of tourism experiences, leading to higher visitor satisfaction and repeat visitation (Goodwin, 2011). Thus, integrating sustainability principles into tourism planning and management is critical for maintaining revenue streams while safeguarding the integrity and resilience of destination resources.

Empirical Review

Risk Taking and Job Creation

Cieřlik (2004) conducted a study on Entrepreneurship and job creation. The purpose of the study was to investigate how entrepreneurial practices aid job creation. The study sampled 205 respondents and data was collected through a structured questionnaire while analytical test was conducted with ANOVA. The result of the study showed that all the considered variables of entrepreneurship have significant relationship with job creation

Olannye and Eromafuru (2016), conducted a research on the dimension of entrepreneurial practices on the performance of fast food restaurants in Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria. The study applied survey research design method and sample objects were 160 staff and customers of some selected Fast Food Restaurants in Asaba, Delta State. They used 20-item validated structured questionnaire served as the research instrument. The correlation and multiple regression analysis were used as major analytical tools. The findings revealed that risk-taking as an indicator of entrepreneurial practice had a significant positive effect on business performance of fast foods establishments. The scholars opined that a well performing business has the capacity to create more employment opportunities.

Risk Taking and Revenue Generation

Ogunlana (2018) conducted a study on the role of entrepreneurship as the driver of economic growth. This study examined the role of entrepreneurship as the driver of economic growth. The study also analyzed challenges faced by business start-ups or small and medium enterprises (SMEs). As a result of the absence of sequential data related to entrepreneurship and sustainable economic growth in Nigeria, the narrative-textual case study method was used to gather information. A self-designed questionnaire was used to gather additional information analyzed in simple percentages. The study found entrepreneurship can play a significant role in achieving revenue generation for the country to overcome her economic crisis. Entrepreneurship tendencies can generate employment, innovation, increase production, and diversify the economy source of revenue while fostering the development of small and medium enterprises in Nigeria.

Gamede and Uleanya (2020) conducted a study on roles of entrepreneurship as a tool to improve economic development: Case of job creation in developing nations. The study explored the role played by entrepreneurship in promoting economic development, economic growth and job creation. Questionnaires were administered to 300 lecturers across 5 tertiary institutions learning in South

Africa. Retrieved data was analyzed using SPSS. The analyzed data show that entrepreneurship has the potency to enhance revenue.

Innovation and Job Creation

Ben-Roy, Pi-Wen and Jean (2016) investigated the relationship among human resource flexibility, organizational innovation. The study found that job creating opportunities can be determined through organizational innovation. The study indicated that if the organization is highly innovative and has adaptable human resource policies, then it will enhance organizational performance, competitive advantage that might lead to breaking into other opportunities and these opportunities will create avenue for new jobs. Richard et al (2012) evaluated the effect of entrepreneurial marketing on outcome goals in SMEs in England. 62 small scale businesses were consulted for the study and a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale design was administered to elicit information for analysis. The study adopted a structural factor analysis for the test of hypothesis. The findings of the study revealed that among all other entrepreneurial practices dimensions, innovation and pro-activeness are the first instinct that will lead to job creation.

Innovation and Revenue Generation

Eshegheri (2017) conducted an investigation on entrepreneurial orientation and performance of medium scale businesses in Nigeria. The cross-sectional research design was adopted for this study. The census study technique was espoused for sample size determination given the sample size of 147 medium businesses from the population size of 147 registered medium scale businesses. Hence, the population size was used as the sample size because it is manageable. 147 copies of the questionnaire were administered; only 125 copies were returned and analyzed. The findings showed that both innovation and pro-activeness are significantly related to revenue generation.

An extension of Wong *et al.*, (2005) was carried out by Peterson and Valliere (2009), which reflects the differences in the economic effects of opportunity and necessity-based entrepreneurship in both developing and developed countries. They used data from 44 countries for the years 2004 and 2005, as allocated by Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) AND Global Competitiveness Report (GCR), to forecast GDP growth for developing and developed nations. The data from GEM was used to determine the effect of different types of entrepreneurship on GDP growth. The GCR data runs additional control variables proposed by three economic growth theories: geography, endogenous growth and innovation. Their findings showed that high-expectation entrepreneurs using national investments in knowledge creation and regulatory freedom can contribute significantly to economic growth rates in developed countries.

Methodology

The study adopted the quasi-experimental research design and the population of the study consisted of a number of providers of tourism SMEs businesses in Delta State. There is no data of registered small scale businesses in Delta State Tourism Board, however, the study sampled 209 small scale entrepreneurs across the State. The sampling technique adopted in this study is the census or total enumeration method because the total population of the study is small. Primary data was obtained through the administration of questionnaires to the respondents. The survey instrument adopted a well-structured questionnaire in which the dependent and independent variables were measured on four point Likert Scale. Mean and standard deviation was executed to analyze the univariate and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PMMC) coefficient, being a parametric test for postulated

hypothesis, was executed to analyze the bivariate (job creation and revenue generation) responses, with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Software Version 22.

Results and Discussion of Findings

Questionnaire Response Rate

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Copies Retrieved	185	88.5	88.5	89
Valid	Copies Invalid	24	11.4	16.4	11
	Total	209	100	100	100

Source: Survey Data, 2024.

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From the Table 4.1, a total of 209 copies of questionnaires were administered, out of which 185 copies were dully completed and returned to the researcher and 24 invalid. The returned copies make up 89% of the total questionnaires administered. This implies that 209 copies of the returned questionnaires were subsequently used for the data analysis to represent 100% of the respondents.

Table1: Correlation showing the relationship between Risk-Taking and Job Creation

Correlations			
		Risk-Taking	Job Creation
Risk-Taking	Pearson Correlation	1	.856**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	185	185
Job Creation	Pearson Correlation	.856**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	185	185

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the result above, Pearson Correlation Co-efficient is 0.256 while P. value (2-tailed) is 0.000. Since P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Therefore, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis which implied that there is significant relationship between Risk-taking and Job Creation. The result of the test of hypotheses shows a positive and statistically significant relationship between risk-taking and job creation. The correlation coefficient indicates a coefficient of $r=.856$ between risk-taking and job creation with a probability value of $.000 < 0.05$. This result is consistent with Olannye&Eromafuru (2016) who posited that risk-taking as an indicator of entrepreneurial practice had a significant positive effect on business performance of fast foods establishments. The scholars opined that a well performing business has the capacity to create more employment opportunities.

Table 2: Correlation showing the Relationship between Risk-taking and Revenue Generation

Correlations

		Risk-taking	Revenue Generation
Risk-taking	Pearson Correlation	1	.887**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	185	185
Revenue Generation	Pearson Correlation	.887**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	185	185

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the result above, Pearson Correlation Co-efficient is 0.887 while P. value (2-tailed) is 0.000. Since P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Therefore, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis which implied that there is significant relationship between Risk-taking and Revenue Generation

The result of the test of hypotheses two shows a positive and statistically significant relationship between risk-taking and revenue generation. The correlation coefficient indicates a coefficient of $r=.887$ between risk-taking and revenue generation with a probability value of $.000 < 0.05$. This implies that 78% of revenue generation can be traced to entrepreneurial risk-taking ability. This result is line with Ogunlana (2018) who posited that entrepreneurship can play a significant role in achieving revenue generation for the country to overcome her economic crisis. Entrepreneurship tendencies can generate employment, innovation, increase production, and diversify the economy source of revenue while fostering the development of small and medium enterprises in Nigeria

Table 3: Correlation showing the relationship between Innovation and Job Creation**Correlations**

		Innovation	Job Creation
Innovation	Pearson Correlation	1	.864**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	185	185
Job Creation	Pearson Correlation	.864**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	185	185

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the result above, Pearson Correlation Co-efficient is 0.264 while P. value (2-tailed) is 0.000. Since P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Researcher therefore, rejected the null hypothesis and accepts the alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is significant relationship between Innovation and Job Creation. The result of the test of hypotheses shows a positive and statistically significant relationship between innovation and job creation. The correlation coefficient indicates a coefficient of $r=.864$ between innovation and job creation with a probability value of $.000 < 0.05$. This implies that 74% of job creation can be determined by job creation. This result is consistent with Richard, Marilyn and John (2012) who asserted that among all other entrepreneurial practices dimensions, innovation and pro-activeness are the first instinct that will lead to job creation

Table 4:correlation showing the relationship between Innovation and Revenue Generation**Correlations**

		Innovation	Revenue Generation
Innovation	Pearson Correlation	1	.871**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	185	185
Revenue Generation	Pearson Correlation	.871**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	185	185

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the result above, Pearson Correlation Co-efficient is 0.291 while P. value (2-tailed) is 0.000. Since P-value of 0.000 is less than 0.05. Researchers therefore, reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. This implies that there is significant relationship between Innovation and Revenue Generation

An investigation on innovation and revenue generation was found to be positive and statistically significant. The correlation coefficient indicates a coefficient of .871 between customer intensity and adaptability with a probability value of $.000 < 0.05$. This implies that 75% of revenue can be traced to innovation. This result is consistent with previous studies of Eshegheri (2017) who stated that both innovation and pro-activeness are significantly related to revenue generation.

Conclusions

The main objective of the study was to examine the relationship between entrepreneurial practices and economic empowerment. The four dimensions of entrepreneurial practices had positive and significant relationship economic empowerment measures. The study was concluded by stating that there is need for operators of SMEs to be entrepreneurial oriented in order to achieve success in the competitive business environment.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are hereby made based on the findings of this study;

- i. SMEs should take calculated risk in order to enhance and improve the production of their craft
- ii. Craft makers should anticipate future needs and wants of the tourists, in order to accommodate growing patronage.
- iii. Craft makers should develop entrepreneurial skills, as this will help them adapt to the changing environment.
- iv. Educational institutions in the country should make the teaching of entrepreneurship in the tertiary institutions to have practical relevance.

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