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A comparison of the behaviour and motivations of domestic and international young tourists

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Abstract

This paper compares the motivations of young, British, international and domestic tourists, and how they behave during their vacations. The research was located in Torquay, on the Southwest coast of England, and Cala Millor, on the Northeast of Mallorca. These locations represent two of the most popular destinations for young British tourists on domestic and international vacations, respectively. Comparisons between resorts of tourist behaviour seem to be a neglected area of research.

The paper focuses on three aspects of tourist behaviour; use of leisure spaces and leisure times, the nature of the leisure activities engaged in while on vacation, and movements outside of the resorts. The findings of this research suggest that young British tourists on domestic vacations behave in a different manner compared to those holidaying at the international level. Indeed, compared to domestic tourists, young people on an international vacation tended to behave in a more passive and hedonistic manner.

Introduction

There has been a lack of research that has compared the behaviour of tourists, of a similar socio-economic and demographic typology, in different resorts (Dann, Nash, & P. Pearce, 1988). Instead, the focus seems to have been on the relation between the behaviour of tourists in their place of origin and holiday destination (e.g., Debbage, 1991; Krippendorf, 1987a). In addition, there has been some research into tourist behaviour that has just been concerned with individual vacation environments (e.g., Cooper, 1981; Eiser & Ford, 1995; Hartmann, 1988).

The decision to study young tourists is related to the fact that they have been neglected in the past by researchers studying in the field of tourism (Ford & Eiser, 1996). Young people also represent an important, separate, segment of the tourist industry, both financially and numerically (Wheatcroft & Seekings, 1995). Indeed, it has been estimated that young tourists now account for approximately 20% of all international arrivals and the money spent by people during their vacations (Theuns, 1991). The use of British tourists for this study is related to the fact that they represent a significant segment of the young persons travel market within Europe (Seekings, 1995). Therefore, establishing a clearer understanding of young tourists is important, not only in terms of constructing social theories, but also because it may enable tour operators to meet the needs and expectations of young people. For the purpose of this paper 'young people' are defined as anyone between the age of 16 and 35 years. Although this is a somewhat arbitrary definition, it is not without precedence (e.g., Kilroy Travels. In - Bywater, 1993).

Influence of distance on tourist behaviour

Within the context of tourism, the term 'distance' may be regarded as "a measure of the separation between two or more locations" (Larkins & Peters, 1983: 62). This measure consists of an objective component which represents movements by tourists across physical boundaries, such as the borders between countries. In addition, distance has a cultural component which reflects the difference between cultures encountered by tourists. Finally, distance also has a perceptual component, representing the differences tourists perceive between holiday destinations (Holt-Jensen, 1988; Johnston, 1987).

Debbage (1991) suggests that how tourists behave on holiday differs in relation to the distance between their resort and place of origin. He stated that those tourists who travelled the furthest to the resort he studied (Paradise Island, in the Bahamas) were likely to exhibit behaviour of an 'allocentric' nature. An allocentric tourist may be defined as an inquisitive and curious individual, who is self-confident and adventurous (Hoxter & Lester, 1988). In contrast, Debbage claimed that tourists traveling a relatively short distance to the Bahamas behaved in a 'psychocentric' manner. This is the opposite of allocentric behaviour and is characterized by low activity levels, a lack of contact with the host society, and a preference for familiar types of food and entertainment (Hoxter & Lester, 1988).

In contrast to Debbage (1991), Laing (1987) claims that as the absolute distance between a person's place of origin and holiday destination increases, so too does the likelihood that he/she will exhibit 'passive' behaviour while on vacation. Indeed, during his research Laing (1987: 257 - 8) found that "far more domestic holidaymakers (51%) than foreign holidaymakers (16%) indulge in 'active' behaviour". Passive behaviour is characterized by low levels of activity and interaction with host societies. In contrast, high activity levels and interaction with the host society are the defining features of active

behaviour. Consequently, it may be suggested that passive and psychocentric behaviour are closely related, as are allocentric and active behaviour. Laing (1987) attempted to identify potential reasons for the differences in the behaviour of the domestic and foreign holidaymakers he studied. He suggested it may be a result of confidence and the greater ability of domestic tourists to become involved with the host population and gain local information from them because of the lack of any language barriers. The relative familiarity of the domestic tourist's surroundings, compared to those of the foreign holidaymaker, may also induce them to exhibit active behaviour compared to their international counterparts.

Further support for the suggestion that distance influences behaviour is related to the claim that behaviour on holiday generally contrasts with leisure behaviour (Eiser & Ford, 1995). Although both types of behaviour occur during what is referred to as discretionary or free time (Mathieson & Wall, 1983), there is a physical difference between tourism and leisure. The former takes place in the 'holiday environment', which is geographically separate from the area inhabited by an individual during the rest of the year. In contrast, leisure takes place within a person's home environment (Shaw & Williams, 1994).

The difference between behaviour in the holiday and home environments appears to be that in the former the individual will often behave in a more liberated and less restrained manner compared to when in the latter. Indeed, within the context of the beach-oriented holiday environment Shields (1990) has suggested that tourists behave in a hedonistic and pleasure seeking manner to a degree that may not be acceptable in the home environment. Dann and Cohen (1991) add to this, claiming that within the tourist environment responsibility is placed in abeyance or suspended. This suggests that people may behave more 'hedonistically' when they are on holiday compared to the 'normal' behaviour they exhibit in their home area.

A potential explanation of these differences in the behaviour of people, depending on whether they are in a tourism or home environment, is provided by Leontidou (1994), who claims that individuals are influenced by the atmosphere of holidays. Furthermore, Mathieson and Wall (1983: 149) state that "by its very nature, tourism means that people are away from the puritanical bonds of normal living, anonymity is assured away from home, and money is available to spend". Eiser and Ford (1995: 326) add that the tourist may see "oneself as a different kind of person when on holiday, less constrained by normal role demands and interpersonal obligations".

The suggestion that distance may have an influence on tourist behaviour is not without its critics. For example, Buswell (1996: 317) claims that "the apocryphal stories of British (German, Dutch, French, it matters not) teenagers not actually realizing they are on holiday on an island is only too believable in the case of the Balearics. They bring their geographies with them; the Balearics merely add sunshine and a different currency". This suggests that the geographical location of a resort, relative to a tourists' place of origin may not influence his/her behaviour. Support for the suggestion that distance between place of origin and holiday destination does not influence tourist behaviour is provided by Krippendorf (1987b: 31), who states that "having arrived at the scene of their dreams, many tourists behave in much the same way as they do at home". He suggests this may be the result of the fact that all tourists have deep-rooted habits and needs, ones that cannot be simply left at home.

In addition, this 'cultural baggage' or 'residual culture' is recognized by Bystrzanowski (1989), who suggests it will influence tourist behaviour to a certain degree. However, he also notes the existence of a 'tourist culture' which consists of an "animated nonordinary lifestyle, observable rituals, behaviours, and pursuits [which] bind them [people on holiday] into one collectivity - that of tourists " (1989: 37). This suggests that although there may be similarities between the holiday and home environments, in terms of

what influences the behaviour of people, there may also be differences. The degree to which this residual culture influences holiday behaviour is, however, unclear although it has been stated that some tourists, for whatever reasons, bring along more and some less of the cultural baggage (Bystrzanowski, 1989).

The distance travelled by the domestic tourists studied for this research was different to that covered by the international ones. This difference has physical, cultural, and perceptual components. Consequently, it may be hypothesized that if distance travelled does influence how tourists behave then these two groups of tourists will exhibit different patterns of behaviour. These differences may be manifested in their use of leisure spaces and times, leisure activities, and movements outside of their resorts. Consequently, it is these aspects of behaviour that are the focus of this paper.

Choice and location of data collection sites

Beach-oriented resorts were chosen to compare the behaviour of international and domestic tourists as a result of claims by Laing (1987) that young holidaymakers prefer destinations which offer attractive beaches, and enjoy a warm, sunny climate. Confirmation of this suggestion is provided by Wheatcroft and Seekings (1995: 13), who state that "young people's main vacations are highly concentrated on beach holidays which typically account - if domestic holidays are included - for around half of all youth travel".

The domestic resort chosen for the study was Torquay, one of the most popular destinations for young people who wish to take a beach-oriented vacation in the UK. This resort is located within the West Country of Britain, which consists of the counties of Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire, and the Isles of Scilly. In 1994 40% of the young British population (15 - 34 years of age) who took domestic vacations stayed in this region (BTA/ETB, 1995). Torquay itself is one of the largest resorts in the West

Country and has been described as a young person's paradise (West Country Tourist Board, 1995) and a town that has a reputation as a young people's resort and a centre of nightlife (Ford & Eiser, 1996: 158). The resort offers a wide variety of activities and leisure facilities, including pubs, wine bars, bistros, restaurants, night-clubs (clubs), amusement arcades, and sports/leisure centres.

Cala Millor, a resort on the Northeast coast of the Spanish island of Mallorca, was chosen as the international destination for this study. In 1993 approximately 1,384,000 trips were taken to this country by young British tourists, making it one of the most popular destinations for this segment of the tourist population (Wheatcroft & Seekings, 1995). Within Spain, Mallorca is especially popular with young British people. Indeed, in 1996 the island was one of the two most popular holiday destinations for tourists who booked holidays with Club 18 - 30 and 2wentys (Lilley, 1997). These companies are the two largest tour operators catering exclusively to young, British, people who wish to take pre-packaged/organized beach-oriented vacations (Lewis, 1996). Within Mallorca, Cala Millor is now recognized as one of the best tourist centres in Mallorca, and amongst the best-known and best-liked in almost all of Western Europe." (Instituto Balear De Promocion Del Turismo, 1996: 4). The resort offers shops, bars, amusement arcades, restaurants and clubs. Although there are no sports/leisure centres open to the public a number of the hotels in the resort do offer such facilities to their guests. In addition, lots of sporting activities, including windsurfing and water-skiing, are available in the resort. Therefore, it may not be surprising that Cala Millor has been described in the tourist brochures as the east coast of Mallorca's most lively resort (Iberotravel Ltd., 1995).

The two resorts chosen as the data collection sites were utilized not only because of their popularity with young people, but also as a result of the similarities between them in terms of the facilities they offer to tourists. This similarity offers the domestic and international tourists the opportunity to

behave in a similar manner should they wish to do so. In addition to allowing the influence of distance on tourist behaviour to be studied, the choice of Mediterranean and British resorts enables a comparison between two of the most popular destinations for British tourists to be undertaken.

Research methodology

The most important restriction on the research on which this paper is based, or any other study of tourists during their summer holiday, is time. Firstly, this is related to the fact that this type of vacation is restricted to a short season of approximately ten weeks per year. Secondly, the tourist is, by definition, on holiday and may be unwilling to spend an extended period of time participating in any research. As a consequence the more time consuming a data collection methodology, the smaller the sample size is likely to be, and the greater the questions about its representativeness. Collection of data after the holiday experience was ruled out by a combination of the desire to focus on specific resorts and the potential for recall error induced by the time between the tourists holiday and any collection of data.

Consequently, the need to collect data on tourist behaviour was met by utilizing a questionnaire, each of which took approximately 25 minutes to complete. This method of data collection allowed a relatively large data sample to be collected. In addition, by conducting it at a 'face-to-face' level a response rate of 80% was achieved. Finally, the ability of the questionnaire to collect data on a wide range of issues in a short period kept demands on tourists time relatively low. As a result it was possible to collect information about the behaviour and decision making processes of 139 and 141 young British tourists in Torquay and Cala Millor, respectively. The surveys were conducted during July and August of 1995. The day-time temperature in both resorts during these months was between 25 and 30°C, although Cala Millor

tended to be 2 - 3 degrees warmer than Torquay (Torbay Meteorological Department, 1996; Spanish Tourist Office, 1996).

Comparison of tourist behaviour

Type of leisure space/time visited	% of domestic tourists	% of international tourists
Bars	62	89
Restaurants	31	53
Shops	83	85
Night-clubs	27	54
Beach	57	93
Night-time	79	96

As part of the survey the tourists were asked about their use of specific types of leisure spaces and leisure time. The results, highlighted in table 1, show that, compared to the domestic sample, a higher percentage of the international tourists had been into each type of space and out during the night-time. Only in the case of the shops was the percentage of domestic and international tourists similar, with only a 2% difference between the two groups. In contrast, 27% more international than domestic tourists stated they had been into a pub or night-club. The largest difference between the two sets of tourists was related to the beach, where only 57% of the domestic tourists stated they had been compared to 93% of the international ones.

The survey also asked the tourists to indicate the number of days they had been into each leisure space and out during the night-time. This figure was divided by the number of days the tourists had been on holiday to provide a

frequency of their use of the leisure spaces and time. To facilitate analysis, the frequency of a subject's visits to each space/time was placed into four groups: 'very rarely' (1 - 25%), 'rarely' (26 - 50%), 'frequently' (51 - 75%), and 'very frequently' (76 - 100%).

Frequency of visits	Bars		Restaurants		Shops		Clubs		Beach		Night	
	D	I	D	I	D	I	D	I	D	I	D	I
Very Rarely	7	2	16	31.5	3	6	13	14	6	14	6	3
Rarely	32	10	44	27	15	11	55	24	41	21	32	11
Frequently	38	22	28	31.5	11	2	21	25	20	11	42	24
Very Frequently	23	66	12	36	71	81	11	37	33	54	20	62

D = Domestic tourists

I = International tourists

The results shown in table 2 suggest that the percentage of international tourists who had been into each type of leisure space and out at night 'very frequently' was higher than in the case of the domestic sample. In the case of the shops only 10% more of the international tourists than the domestic ones had been into the shops very frequently. In contrast, compared to the international tourists who had been into a pub 43% less of the domestic sample stated they been into this type of leisure space very frequently.

As well as being asked about their use of leisure spaces and leisure times the tourists were required to rank a list of leisure activities from the one they had engaged in the most (1) to the least (9). To facilitate analysis of this data the ranks were condensed into four groups and labeled 'very frequently' (rank of 1

- 2), 'frequently' (2.5 - 4), 'infrequently' (4.5 - 6), and 'very infrequently' (6.5 - 9).

Table 3 shows that a higher percentage of the domestic tourists, than the international ones, appear to have engaged in the 'active' leisure activities (i.e., walking around the resort and area, and visiting places of interest) either 'frequently' or 'very frequently'. In contrast, compared to the domestic tourists, 26% more of the international ones suggested they had engaged in the 'passive' activity of sunbathing/relaxing by the swimming pool or sea 'very frequently'. Table 3 also indicates that more of the international tourists than the domestic ones had engaged in those activities associated with the collection of memorabilia (i.e., shopped for souvenirs and taken photos) either 'frequently' or 'very frequently'.

	Shopping		Taken photos		Engaged in sport		Sunbathing /relaxing		Visited places		Walked resort		Eaten local food		Walked surrounding area	
	D	I	D	I	D	I	D	I	D	I	D	I	D	I	D	I
Frequency engaged in																
Very Frequently	15	12	9	13	14	6	34	76	16	8	63	44	22	22	22	10
Frequently	9	21	15	23	8	7	19	12	19	8	25	28	17	18	28	21
infrequently	20	24	17	28	19	19	13	4	18	21	5	17	19	28	23	24
Very infrequently	56	43	59	36	59	68	34	8	47	63	7	11	42	32	27	45

D = Domestic tourists

I = International tourists

The apparent tendency for the domestic tourists to be more 'active' than their international counterparts is also demonstrated by studying the percentage of tourists who had been on excursions outside of their resort. In the case of the domestic tourists 60% stated they had been on at least one trip outside of Torquay. In contrast, only 24% of the international ones said they had been on any excursions during their vacation in Cala Millor.

As the results of the survey indicate, the international and domestic tourists appear to behave differently. Consequently, these findings may be utilized to support the claim by Debbage (1991) and Laing (1987) that distance travelled does have an influence on the nature of the behaviour exhibited by tourists during their vacations. However, the results also contrast with the suggestion that distance travelled does not influence holiday behaviour (Buswell, 1996).

Compared to the domestic tourists the international ones appear to have behaved in a relatively 'passive' manner. Indeed, the majority of the latter sample tended to spend their holiday within Cala Millor engaged 'very frequently' in 'sunbathing/relaxing by the hotel pool or the sea'. In contrast, the tourists surveyed in Torquay exhibited behaviour of a relatively 'active' nature. This is illustrated by the fact that, compared to the international sample, more domestic tourists had been on excursions and a higher percentage had engaged in active leisure pursuits within their resort 'very frequently'. These results suggest that tourists traveling a relatively large distance to reach their holiday destination will behave in a passive manner, compared to those who travel a shorter distance. While these findings provide support for Laing's (1987) suggestion that domestic holidaymakers are more active than their international counterparts, they contrast with Debbage's (1991) work, which indicated that those tourists who travelled the furthest to reach their destination were the most likely to exhibit active behaviour.

The results of the survey also indicate that the international tourists tended to behave in a more hedonistic manner - drinking alcohol, partying, and generally having a good time - compared to their domestic counterparts. This is illustrated by the fact more of the Cala Millor tourists, than the Torquay ones, had been into any of the pubs and night-clubs, and been out at night in their resort. In addition, compared to the domestic tourists a higher percentage of the international ones had been into these leisure spaces and out at night 'very frequently'.

The relatively hedonistic/passive behaviour of the international tourists appears to be comparable to the way the young tourists studied by Ford (1991), on holiday in the beach-oriented resort of Torbay, behaved. Indeed, he found that "the most common activities were resting and relaxing in accommodation in the morning, beaching in the afternoon, and visiting pubs and/or night-clubs in the evening" (1991: 32). Similarly, Club 18 - 30 (1995) state that the focal point of daytime activity for their young clients is either the beach or the swimming pool within the tourists accommodation where they spend the time relaxing and sunbathing in preparation for going to the pubs and night-clubs in the night-time.

Comparison of holiday motivations

In addition to inquiring about tourist behaviour, the questionnaire asked people to rank seven potential holiday motivations from the most important reason behind their decision to take a vacation (1), to the least (7). To assess any differences in motivation between the international and domestic tourists these ranks were divided into four groups, labeled 'very important' (rank 1 - 2), 'important' (2.5 - 4), 'unimportant' (4.5 - 6), and 'very unimportant' (greater than 6).

Table 4 shows that most of the domestic and international tourists were motivated by a desire to 'relax', 'enjoy themselves', and 'get away from home'. In contrast, very few tourists in Torquay or Cala Millor stated that a desire to 'meet people', 'visit new places', 'engage in sport', or 'get a suntan' were 'very important' motivations behind their decision to take a vacation. These results are similar to those of Ford (1991) who found the young tourists he studied in Torbay were primarily motivated by a desire to enjoy nightlife and entertainment. This result also seems to validate Club 18 - 30's (Personal letter, from product executive, Club 18 - 30, 1996: 2) marketing of their holidays "as a fortnight of Saturday nights [where] entertainment is on tap 24 hours a day, 7 days a week". Similarly, the product manager of 2wenty5 claims that "the youth market tends to want to go to the places that already have a reputation for partying" (Lewis, 1996:33).

Despite the similarities between the motivations of the domestic and international tourists there are also a number of differences between the two groups. Indeed, table 4 indicates that a higher percentage of the international tourists ranked a desire to relax, a passive motivation, and to enjoy themselves, a hedonistic motivation, as a 'very important' holiday motivation compared to the domestic tourists. In contrast, more of the Torquay tourists than the Cala Millor ones ranked a desire to visit new places and engage in sport, both of which are active motivations, as very important reasons taking their vacation. These results suggest that the international tourists were more motivated towards hedonistic and passive behaviour than their domestic counterparts. Given that the tourists in Cala Millor also seem to have behaved in a more passive/hedonistic manner than those in Torquay these results appear to provide support for the suggestion that how tourists behave while on holiday is related to their motivations for taking a vacation (Mansfeld, 1990; 1992; Plog, 1987).

	Meet people		Visit new place		Engage in sport		Relax		Get a suntan		Enjoy self		Get away from home	
	D	I	D	I	D	I	D	I	D	I	D	I	D	I
Importance of motivation														
Very important	17	18	16	9	7	1	55	62	0	12	46	59	34	25
Important	22	24	22	11	2	4	24	23	5	33	18	30	32	37
Unimportant	46	40	34	41	40	38	15	7.5	54	35	29	9	26	23
Very unimportant	15	18	28	39	51	57	6	7.5	41	20	7	2	8	15

D = Domestic tourists

I = International tourists

Conclusions

Despite the apparent similarity of Cala Millor and Torquay, in terms of their leisure facilities and environment, the behaviour of the UK tourists appears to differ depending on whether they were holidaying at the national or international level. This raises questions about the validity of the claim by Buswell (1996) that the location of a tourist's destination has no influence on the nature of his/her behaviour. Rather, the results highlighted in this paper suggest the domestic tourists were more active and less hedonistic than their international counterparts who tended towards passive/hedonistic behaviour. This suggests that, compared to those surveyed in Torquay, the Cala Millor sample more accurately reflect the image of the young beach-oriented tourist, forwarded by Josiam et al. (1996), and Club 18 - 30 (1995), as a passive/hedonistic individual. The findings highlighted in this paper also provide support for Laing's (1987) claim that as distance from place of origin to resort increases so does the tendency of a tourist to behave in a passive manner. However, they contrast with the results of Debbage's (1991) work which indicated that the tourists who travel the furthest are the most likely to behave in an allocentric/active manner.

Although it has been suggested that the differences between the domestic and international tourists are related to the distance between their place of origin and resort, the nature of this distance has still to be determined. Although there is a physical component to distance, there may also be a psychological, or perceptual one (Holt-Jensen, 1988). It is widely accepted that tourists behave in a more hedonistic and less constrained manner while on holiday, compared to when they are in their place of origin (Leontidou, 1994; Dann & Cohen, 1991). This difference seems to be stimulated by the perception of the individual that, when on holiday, they are in a different environment, where a differing set of rules govern their behaviour, namely the 'tourist culture' (D. Pearce, 1989).

However, the behaviour of tourists also seems to be influenced by the residual culture they bring on holiday with them. This culture influences how people behave within their home environment (Bystrzanowski, 1989). The degree to which this residual culture influences how tourists behave while on holiday is currently unclear. However, it may be the case that it is stimulated by similarities, perceived or actual, between a tourist's home and holiday environment.

In the case of Cala Millor, the resort has relatively few similarities with the home environments of the British tourists. Indeed, the first language of the host population is Spanish and very few of the shops in the resort would be found in the UK. Consequently, there is little to stimulate the cultural baggage of the international tourists. Instead, the tourist culture is allowed to dominate, enabling these tourists to behave in a relatively hedonistic manner. In contrast, compared to the international tourists, the domestic ones were in an environment that was similar to that of their place of origin. For example, the primary language spoken in Torquay is English, many of the shops would be familiar to domestic tourists, and the media services are basically the same as the tourists receive in their home environment. These similarities may stimulate the tourists cultural baggage and, as a result, prevent them from adopting a tourist culture and behaving in a hedonistic manner to the same degree as the international tourists were able to.

Therefore, it may be suggested that the difference in the behaviour of the domestic and international tourists is, at least partially, related to how the two groups perceive their holiday environment in relation to that of their place of origin. This indicates that the perceptual distance travelled by people to reach their holiday destinations may be more important in determining their behaviour than the physical distance travelled.

Distance, be it physical or perceptual, is not, however, the only potential explanation for the behavioural differences noted in this paper. Rather, the

differences between how the two sets of tourists behaved may be related to differences in their holiday motivations. Indeed, the results highlighted in this paper indicate that the international tourists were more highly motivated by passive and hedonistic desires than their domestic counterparts. As a result of these differences in motivation, it may not be surprising that the international tourists behaved in a more hedonistic/passive manner than those surveyed in Torquay. Indeed, these results seem to confirm Mansfeld's (1990) suggestion that holiday motivations influence tourist behaviour. However, it is possible that the differences between the motivations of the domestic and international tourists are related to differences in the perceptual distance between the tourists home environments, and Torquay and Cala Millor.

Further research is clearly required to validate the results of this research and to test the hypothesis that differences in the behaviour and motivations of domestic and international tourists are related to perceptual distance. Additional work must also be conducted before any definitive explanations can be provided of the differences in the behaviour of the two sets of tourists illustrated in this paper. The surveys were designed to collect relatively large data samples and to provide a quantitative foundation on which to improve the understanding of tourist behaviour, and young tourists in particular. However, more detailed explanations of the behaviour observed by the questionnaire surveys must now be collected in order to provide a clearer understanding of the differences observed between domestic and international tourists. To find these explanations qualitative methodologies must be utilized that allow researchers to provide answers to questions raised by the surveys and to expand on the results.

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