

Integrating Social Media Marketing Toward Business Performance and Food Truck Business Resiliency: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

Due to the rise of popularity of mobile food truck businesses and in line with the challenging food business realm, the efforts of improving the business performance and resiliency demand a more comprehensive view on the influence of its operational attributes towards customer acceptance. However, without prejudice, there is still no study specifically looking at the causes and effects of food truck attributes, mediating effect of customers' acceptance, and business performance toward its business resiliency. In fact, there is still a lack of studies centrally looking at the moderating effect of social media marketing on customers' acceptance of mobile food truck businesses. Understanding these issues is considered important not only for the changes in customer's food behavioural pattern, mobile food truck operator's business survival, but country economic contribution. This research note is an effort to understand the influence of the mobile food truck operational attributes and moderating effect of social media marketing toward its business performance and resiliency. Thus, a conceptual framework integrating social media marketing toward business performance and the mobile food truck business resiliency is proposed to fill the gap and align with the earlier issues.

Keywords:

Food truck; business performance; business resiliency; customer acceptance; social media marketing

1 Introduction

With the trendy, branded, and serving variety of gourmet cuisines and snacks with modern equipment, the mobile food truck industry has gained significant traction and momentum all over the world, with the global revenue amounting to 1 billion U.S. Dollars in 2019 (Food Truckr, 2019). Taking a few examples, statistic shows that the U.S. mobile food truck industry in 2014 and 2015 was valued at 856.7 million dollars. The industry was forecasted to increase by another 140 million U.S. dollars in 2020 (Coldiretti 2016). This phenomenon has also happened in other countries in the world.

Without exception, the situation could also readily be seen within Malaysia. There has been a positive development in the mobile food truck sector, especially in recent years (Abd Rahman, 2019). Due to the country's economic contribution, the Malaysian government has established massive opportunities for the mobile food truck sector, which is the most common sector at present, with the hope that it can play a positive role in the development of the country, according to former Deputy Minister Datuk Dr. Mohd Hatta Md Ramli (Malay Mail, 2019). With the promising growing, the mobile food truck gradually conquered the modern and traditional food to make it on the go. To date, there are around 70 modern food trucks in the Klang Valley alone, middling of 5 mobile food trucks opening each month, and although as anecdotal evidence, the trend is rising across all states especially in the city areas (Abd Rahman, 2019). Shahwahid, Bakar & Eksan (2018) accentuated that urbanization, growing internet technologies, and government agencies funding has had a tremendous impact on the growth of the mobile food truck industry in Malaysia with the consumer food-buying behaviour has changed dramatically.

Lee, Hallak, and Sardeshmukh (2016) stressed that having a clear vision, mission, and operation strategies and being willing to revoke and revise the existing policy or strategies will help the foodservice operators, including the mobile food truck businesses to become more flexible in the face of unexpected events or crisis. Furthermore, the foodservice operation will be greatly benefited when cost-conscious culture is nurtured within the organization and coupled with the gradated development process to ensure the restaurant business resilience becomes robust and strong (Majid, Zahari, & Yusoff, 2016). Given the current environment, the resilience of the foodservice operation is also dependent on the degree of adaptation in certain technological aspects ranging from record-keeping to the customers' need monitoring (Othman, Zahari & Radzi, 2013). Tibay, Miller, Chang-Richards, Egbelakin, Sevilla & Wilkinson (2018) noted that business resilience dealing with the need to withstand the ever-changing market that has influenced changes in legislation and regulations along with changes in market trends and the demand of the customers.

The preceding discussions clearly indicate that resiliency in the foodservice operation in general, particularly mobile food trucks, is of utmost importance. In fact,

managing the resilience in the mobile food truck is becoming increasingly important in today's era.

2 Past Studies

As a new food brand concept, the mobile food truck is undoubtedly in a way facing the issue of resiliency. Due to a lack of available studies concerning mobile food truck resiliency, matter on this issue is looking from the perspective of the restaurant operation. It is proven that restaurants or restaurateurs who afford to maintain their existing customers, attract new ones, and influence repeat customer patronization not only upholds the business performance, but will stay longer or achieve business resiliency (Magnini & Ford, 2004). Shreds of evidence avail that promising restaurant performance is determined its business resiliency, and many scholars argued that performance is the antecedent of the business resiliency (Qin and Prybutok, 2008; Ayala, and Manzano, 2014; Ghapar, Othman, and Jamal, 2014; Mathe-Soulek, Slevitch, and Dallinger, 2015; Zahari, Majid, Shariff, and Hanafiah, 2017; Raja Abdullah, Ariffin, Mohi, and Mohd Anuar, 2017). Other scholars, on the other hand, contended that restaurant success and survival depend on its performances which resulted from customers' viewpoint about the products offer (Namin, 2017).

In line with the above notion, business performances as well are contingent on customers' acceptance. Alfiero, Giudice, and Bonadonna (2017) espoused that customer acceptance from operator's perspective is the process by which an assessment is made whether it is sensible to do business with a particular customer or prospect, while from a customer point of view, acceptance means that they are accepting products which have been sold or consumed. They further argued that providing customer acceptance of the products offers is crucial to maintain competitiveness and ensure business performance. Studies revealed that customer acceptance is an important element for any business, regardless of whether the business directly involves customers face to face or otherwise (Suh and Han, 2002; Eriksson, Kerem, and Nilsson, 2005; Yao, Fang, Dineen, and Yao, 2009). It includes customer recognition of artificial intelligence (AI), banking technology, self-service technology, restaurant technology, water pollution, and many others.

Customer acceptance, according to Singam, Karunagaran, Pandiyan, Subramanian, and Govindan (2014), is something that can be assessed through several aspects that are included creative advertising, colour, and humour, distinctive, interactivity and content. In the restaurant context, customer acceptance can be measured through sales, profit, and market share (Yeung and Ennew, 2001). Angelova and Zekiri (2011) noted that customer acceptance is the manifestation felt by the customers that experienced restaurant performance that has fulfilled their expectations. Apart from that, studies by Fitzpatrick, Chapman, and Barr (1997): Haghighi, Dorosti, Rahnama, and

Hoseinpour (2012); Bae, and Kim (2014); Radzi, Bakhtiar, Mohi, Zahari, Sumarjan, Chik, and Anuar (2014); Suarez et al. (2019) dealing with restaurant area shown that among the factors that lead to customer acceptance are menu, service quality, and servicescape.

Following the preceding statement, the menu dealing with food is far more important in influencing customer acceptance to dine in a restaurant. Attributes like the taste, variety, and quality of food stand out as major determinants for customer acceptance. Freshly prepared food, the temperature of food served, and the presentation of food has also affected the customers' inclinations (Othman, 2007; Zopiatis and Pribic, 2007; Liu and Jang, 2009). In addition to food, service quality is also a key factor that leads to higher customer acceptance, satisfaction, intention to revisit, and greater profitability (Kivela et al., 2000; Kim et al., 2009; Bougoure and Neu, 2010; Keith and Simmers, 2011; Nam and Lee, 2011; Marković et al., 2013; Liat et al., 2014; Han and Hyun, 2017). These scholars share the same thought that service quality comprising the food quality, promptness, attentiveness, and efficiency clearly influences the existing customer and new customers. In fact, new dining experiences are crucial for customers as their acceptance of those elements portrays that the restaurateurs are successfully gaining positive customer responsiveness. In line with the globalization and efficiency in service delivery, customers are always becoming more selective, demanding, and sophisticated in their place of eating. Consequently, it is contended that customers' acceptance and satisfaction with it not only increases sales, reduces costs, builds market shares but is key to business survival (Wishna, 2000).

In addition to the preceding attributes, although not of utmost importance, the servicescape' deals with the physical environment such as the overall layout, design, ambiance, artifacts, décor, and atmosphere like music, colours, and lighting somewhat matters the customers (Bitner, 1992). The perceived service setting environment influences the interaction between and among customers and service contact personnel (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2003; Harris and Fleming, 2005). The later scholars argued that the positive response to the servicescape might enhance customer interactions, customer acceptance as well as overall satisfaction with the service, and thus create loyalty to the service providers (Namasivayam and Lin, 2010; Simpeh, Simpeh, Nasiru, and Tawiah, 2011; Mousavai, Hamid, Asgarpour, Jamshidy, and Gheysari, 2015).

In the era of globalization, not harsh to say that, although still relevant, conventional marketing is slightly overtaken by digital and social media marketing in most business realms. The appearance of digital and social media marketing undoubtedly creates a rapid change in how the information is delivered and disseminated. He, Wang, Chen, and Zha (2017) found that digital and social media marketing not only able to heighten the customers' awareness of the products, but increase sales and revenue, improve customer satisfaction, create brand awareness, build a reputation, and increase the customer loyalty and retention.

From the overall discussion and with certain characteristics, mobile in terms of location, limited seating capacity, different customers received every time, grab and go food kind of nature in particular, few questions related to mobile food truck businesses arise: 1) Do the mobile food truck attributes like menu, service quality, and servicescape which is slightly different than the restaurant operation influences the customers' acceptance? 2) To what extent or how effective a new social media marketing use by the mobile food truck operators on their products increases or decrease their customers' acceptance? 3) To what extent that the customers' value of those attributes contributes to mobile food truck business performance? Finally, and most importantly, 4) How do the mobile food truck attributes and business performance determine their business resiliency?

All these conjectures are in fact unknown, as not many of the available studies holistically looking at the relationship or the causes and effects of those variables from the mobile food trucks' perspective. Based on the literature, many of the available studies on mobile food truck business to date are centrally focused on halal compliance (Shahwahid, Bakar, & Eksan, 2018) brand equity (Mokhtar, Othman, Arsat, & Bakhtiar, 2017), food safety knowledge, intention to visit (Shin, Kim, & Severt, 2019), customer satisfaction (McNeil, & Young, 2019), leadership characteristics (Fahlevi, Zuhri, Parashakti, & Ekhsan, 2019) image, risk (Van Embden, 2020), value, service quality, loyalty (Gopi, & Samat, 2020), and consumer choices (Ideris, Zainum, Mustafa, Nordin, & Zainol, 2017). Without prejudice, there is still no study specifically looking at the causes and effects of food truck attributes, mediating effect of customers' acceptance and business performance toward its business resiliency. In fact, there is still a lack of studies centrally looking at the moderating effect of social media marketing toward customers' acceptance on the mobile food truck businesses. Hence, understanding these issues is considered important not only for the changes in customer's food behavioural pattern, mobile food truck operator's business survival, but country economic contribution. Thus, a conceptual framework integrating social media marketing toward business performance and food truck business resiliency is proposed to fill the gap and in line with the above-mentioned issues.

3 Integrating Social Media Marketing Toward Business Performance and Food Truck Business Resiliency: A Conceptual Framework

The resilience concept has been applied and defined in a variety of ways. Most resilience application emphasizes in the face of disturbance, stress, or adversity as a capacity for successful adaptation (Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche, & Pfefferbaum, 2008; Tiernan, Drennan, Nalau, Onyango, Morrissey, & Mackey, 2019; Duchek, 2020; Ogutu, 2021). Although there are exceptions, most discussions, if not the definitions and concepts themselves, distinguish resilience from resistance. Resistance

in mathematics and technology refers to the force required to displace the system from equilibrium. In contrast, resilience dealt with the time required for the system to return to equilibrium once displaced (Bodin & Wiman 2004). Across these, there is a general consensus on the resilience concept: 1). Resilience is better conceptualized as an ability or process than as an outcome (Brown & Kulig 1996; Pfefferbaum et al. 2005); and 2). Resilience is better conceptualized as adaptability than as stability (Handmer & Dovers 1996; Waller 2001).

Within the confines of the present study, resilience is centered around the notion that the mobile food truck is to withstand the external environmental pressure and the threat that would leave the operation to be widely open to various risks and vulnerabilities associated with it. Thus, to understand the connection between the variables of interest of this study, particularly menu, service quality, servicescape, social media, customers' acceptance, business performance, and mobile food truck operation resiliency and after comprehensive search and understanding, there are four key theories of resilience that suited in underpinning the study; Social Capital Theory, Resource-Based View (RBV), and Dynamic Capability Theory, discussed in the subsequent section.

3.1 Social Capital Theory

The social capital theory is an integrated concept of actual or potential resources gained by an individual or group of a social system or network (Bourdieu, 1986). This theory contends that social relationships are resources that can lead to the development and accumulation of human capital, and this Social Capital Theory is shown in Figure 1. In this sense, social capital is associated with any feature of a social relationship that yields reproductive benefits, and organizations, either small or big, need social capital to improve competitive advantage. Social capital allows a group of people to work together effectively to achieve a common purpose or goal (Hu, & Randel, 2014). It allowed a society or organization, such as a corporation or a nonprofit, to function together as a whole through trust and shared identity, norms, values, and mutual relationships (Berger, Cunningham, & Drumwright, 2006).

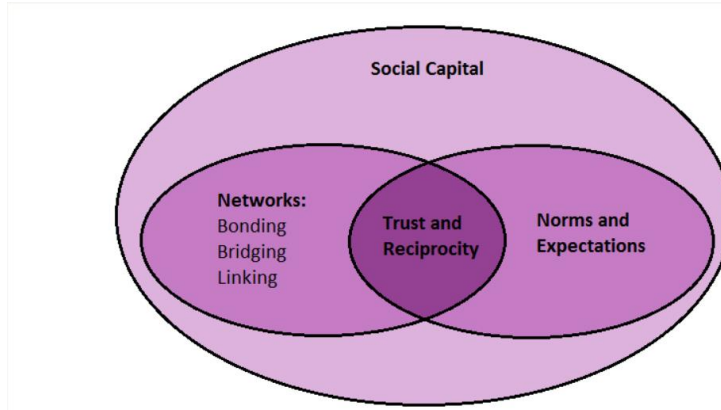


Figure 1: Social Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 1986)

Researchers argued that by applying the social capital concept diligently, small business managers who build a network within and outside organizations not only would improve trust but increase customer expectation as well as business performance and resiliency (Chow & Chan, 2008; Lee et al., 2015 and Möller et al., 2018). In this respect, the social capital theory's relevance to this study's conceptual model is associated with social media marketing and customer acceptance toward food and services for mobile food trucks. Many potential consumers are contemplated accepting the mobile food trucks' food and services based on conventional marketing like flyers and brochures and through social media marketing like Facebook, tweeter, WhatsApp, and Instagram. In this sense, it is accentuated that social media marketing determines the degree of customer acceptance of mobile food truck operators' products and services and subsequently regulates the performance and its business resiliency.

3.2 Resource-Based View (RBV)

The resource-based view (RBV), or resource-based theory, is a classical and influential theory in the field of information systems. The theory, derived from Penrose's (1959) Theory of Firm growth and was expanded by Wernerfelt (1984) and then popularized by Barney (1991). The Resource-Based View (RBV) analyses and evaluates an organization's internal resources, emphasizing resources and capabilities when developing a plan to attain long-term competitive advantages. Resources can be thought of as inputs that allow businesses to carry out their operations. In addition, their internal resources and competencies determine firms' strategic choices in their external business environment.

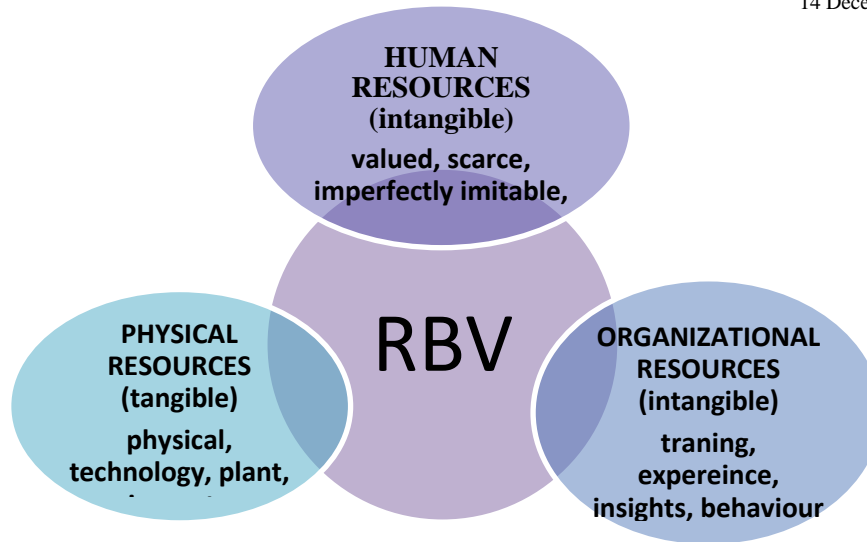


Figure 2: The Resource Based View (RBV) (Barney, 1991).

It is assumed that RBV could underpin this conceptual framework, particularly regarding the role of resources in attaining the long-term competitive advantage for sustained better performance and resiliency of mobile food truck operation. In this context, menu, service quality, servicescape is the organizational resources or the primary sources of a mobile food truck. In contrast, facility, equipment, truck design, service, ordering system is the physical resources. Formal training, the operators' experience, the number of staff used, and income are human resources. Combining those three resources is believed to create capabilities that may culminate in competitive advantage and improve performance. It also believes the customer level of acceptance will be increased when resources in the resources are above expectation. In other words, the combination of these resources, either tangible or intangible, is predicted if it is wisely used or with efficient strategies despite facing some challenges could not only lead to positive operating performance but also business resiliency.

3.3 Dynamic Capability Theory

Teece and Pisano's (1994) dynamic capability theory are an extension of the firm's resource-based view theory (RBV) (Barney, 1986, 1991). A dynamic capability theory is a special type of capability that integrates, builds, and reconfigures internal and external resources to address rapidly changing environments (Teece and Pisano's (1994). This theory provides a useful perspective for addressing the question of how organizations can cope with changing environments by adapting to change and creating competitive advantage through renewed resources. In other words, dynamic capabilities enable companies to adapt to climate change and allow them to cope with extreme events, which is one of the most dominant environmental risks that affect small businesses.

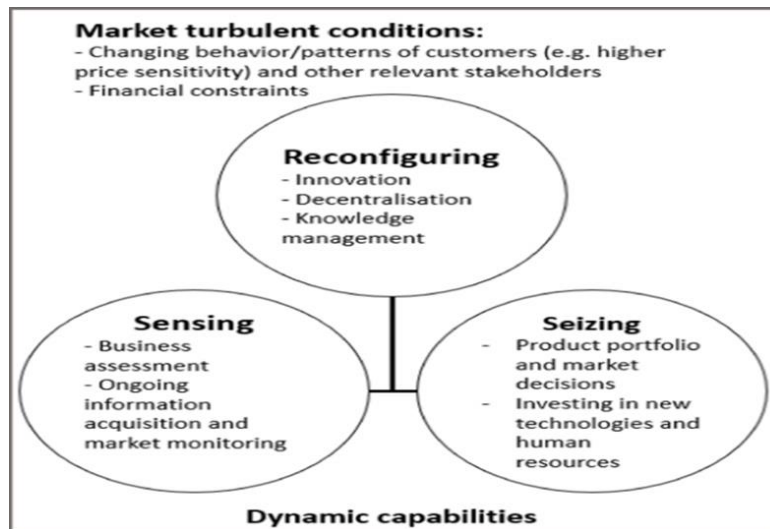


Figure 3: Dynamic Capability Theory (Teece and Pisano's, 1994)

Through the dynamic Capability Theory analogy and deals with the scope of the present study, three contentions could be made. In this sense, to be resilient, the sensing process should be done by mobile food truck operators. This involves gathering and analysing the existing resources, customers, competitors, and marketing channels. Subsequent to this or in the seizing stage, the perceived opportunities are made through modifying and introducing the products (menus, service quality, servicescape), truck, number of staff, and operational cost. Finally, through the process of reconfiguring, the recombination and rearrange toward all those mentioned resources are undertaken by the mobile food truck operators and match with business changes. It is hoped that the processes of sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring not only will strengthen the customer acceptance, but increase the mobile food truck business performance and resiliency.

3.4 Application of the Theories

The proposed conceptual framework is looking at the interaction between food truck operational attributes, customer acceptance, business performance, and mobile food truck business resiliency. The role of social media marketing as a moderator is also investigated. Gulati (1998) and Osborn and Hagedoorn (1997) denoted that applying multiple theories in developing a comprehensive conceptual framework or models is necessary for a clear path of understanding the linkages or relationship between each dimension. These scholars also argued that the multi-theory approach could comprehend the intricacy between the inter variable's relationship. With that, the multiple theories adopted in this study are presumed to synergistically elaborate the rationale behind the antecedents and outcomes on the variables of interest. Thus, with the justification made in each preceding theory section, the Social Capital Theory,

Resource-Based View (RBV), and Dynamic Capability Theory is used to underpin this conceptual framework as in Figure 4:

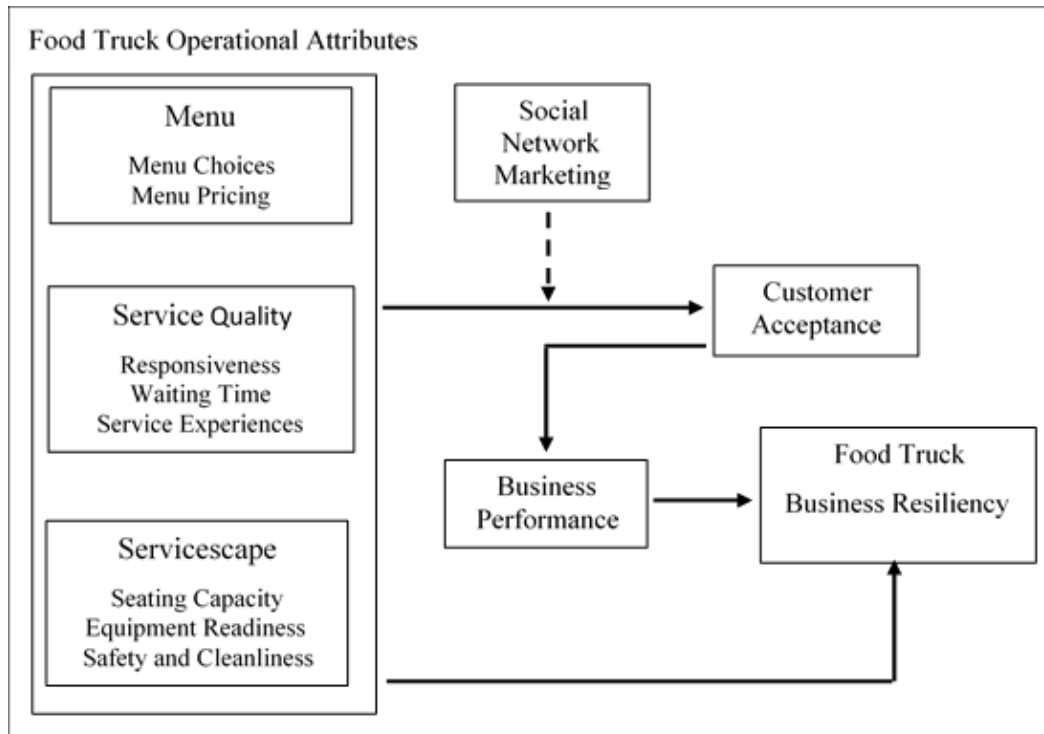


Figure 4: Proposed Conceptual Framework

The proposed conceptual framework depicts the influence of food truck operational attributes and moderating effect of social media marketing toward business performance and resiliency. In detail, eleven conjectures could be made: 1) Menu influence food truck business resilience, 2) Service quality influence food truck business resilience, 3) Servicescape influence food truck business resilience, 4) Menu influence mobile food truck customers' acceptance, 5) Service quality influence mobile food truck customers' acceptance, 6) Servicescape influence mobile food truck customers' acceptance, 7) Customers' acceptance influences the mobile food truck business performance, 8) Business performance influence the mobile food truck resiliency, 9) There is a mediating effect of customer's acceptance on the influence of food truck operational attributes towards it business performance, 10) There is a mediating effect of business performance on the influence of customer's acceptance towards mobile food truck business resiliency, 11) There is a moderating effect of social media marketing on the influence of food truck operational attributes towards customers' acceptance.

4 Conclusion

Due to the emergence of popularity pertaining to food truck businesses, the efforts to improve the business performance and resiliency demand a more comprehensive view on the influence of the mobile food truck operational attributes towards customer acceptance. Besides, the integration of social media marketing is considered to have the potential to act as a catalyst in moderating the effect of heightening or lowering the predicting power of food truck operational attributes towards customer acceptance. This research note is an effort to understand the influence of food truck operational attributes and moderating effect of social media marketing toward business performance and resiliency. With the contributions from the outlined conceptual framework, it will hopefully not only improve the insight on the food truck business performance but also in business resiliency literature.

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