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CONNECTIONS BETWEEN COMPETITIVENESS TRAVEL AND CULTURAL FACTORS

In recent years, nations have engaged in fierce competition to attract tourists, driven by the remarkable growth in emerging tourism destinations. Consequently, these countries have undertaken various initiatives to enhance the competitiveness of their destinations in comparison to others. However, achieving the status of the most popular and preferred choice among tourists has become increasingly challenging.

Existing literature underscores the necessity of exploring the link between the culture of a specific destination and its competitiveness in the realm of tourism. Yet, there is limited understanding of these associations in the current context. This research provides a cultural perspective on the competitiveness of travel and tourism (TTC) in a country by examining the correlation between destination competitiveness, measured by TTC, and national culture. The study delves into these relationships by analyzing data from 73 countries, employing multiple regression to scrutinize the connections, and cluster analysis to categorize the countries.

The findings reveal that dimensions of national culture, such as individualism, long-term orientation, and indulgence, significantly impact the TTC of a country. At the same time, power distance and masculinity show no significant influence. This study underscores the significance of formulating culturally aligned policies to enhance destination competitiveness.

Key words: Cross-cultural study, Hofstede, culture, travel competitiveness.

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Саяхаттың бәсекеге қабілеттілігі және мәдени факторлар арасындағы байланыстар

Соңғы жылдары елдер туристерді тарту үшін қатаң бәсекелестікке түсті, бұл жаңа туристік бағыттар санының айтарлықтай өсуіне ықпал етті. Демек, бұл елдер өз бағыттарының бәсекеге қабілеттілігін арттыруға бағытталған түрлі бастамалар қабылдады. Дегенмен, туристер арасында ең танымал және таңдаулы орын мәртебесіне жету барған сайын қиындай түсуде.

Қолданыстағы әдебиеттер белгілі бір межелі жердің мәдениеті мен оның туризм саласындағы бәсекеге қабілеттілігі арасындағы байланысты зерттеу қажеттілігін көрсетеді. Дегенмен, қазіргі контексте бұл бірлестіктер туралы шектеулі түсінік бар. Бұл зерттеу TTC мен ұлттық мәдениетпен өлшенетін баратын аймақтың бәсекеге қабілеттілігі арасындағы корреляцияны зерттеу арқылы елдегі саяхат және туризм бәсекеге қабілеттілігіне (TTC) мәдени көзқарас береді. Зерттеу байланыстарды мұқият зерттеу үшін бірнеше регрессияны және елдерді санаттау үшін кластерлік талдауды қолдана отырып, 73 елдің деректерін талдау арқылы осы қатынастарды тереңдетеді.

Нәтижелер индивидуализм, ұзақ мерзімді бағдар және болжам (индульгенция) сияқты ұлттық мәдениеттің аспектілері елдің TTC-ге айтарлықтай әсер ететінін көрсетеді. Сонымен қатар, билік қашықтығы мен еркектік маңызды әсер етпейді. Бұл зерттеу баратын елдердің бәсекеге қабілеттілігін арттыру үшін мәдени ерекшеліктерді ескеретін саясатты әзірлеудің маңыздылығын көрсетеді.

Түйін сөздер: мәдениетаралық зерттеу, Хофстеде, мәдениет, саяхаттың бәсекеге қабілеттілігі.

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Связи между конкурентоспособностью путешествия и культурными факторами

В последние годы страны вступили в жесткую конкуренцию за привлечение туристов, чему способствовал значительный рост числа новых туристических направлений. Следовательно, эти страны предприняли различные инициативы, направленные на повышение конкурентоспособности своих направлений. Однако добиться статуса самого популярного и предпочтительного места среди туристов становится все более сложной задачей.

Существующая литература подчеркивает необходимость изучения связи между культурой конкретного места назначения и его конкурентоспособностью в сфере туризма. Тем не менее, существует ограниченное понимание этих ассоциаций в текущем контексте. Это исследование дает культурный взгляд на конкурентоспособность путешествий и туризма (ТТС) в стране путем изучения корреляции между конкурентоспособностью места назначения, измеряемой ТТС и национальной культурой. Исследование углубляется в эти взаимосвязи путем анализа данных из 73 стран, используя множественную регрессию для тщательного изучения связей и кластерный анализ для категоризации стран.

Полученные результаты показывают, что аспекты национальной культуры, такие как индивидуализм, долгосрочная ориентация и допущение (индальгенция), существенно влияют на ТТС страны. В то же время дистанция власти и маскулинность не оказывают существенного влияния. Это исследование подчеркивает важность разработки политики, учитывающей культурные особенности, для повышения конкурентоспособности стран назначения.

Ключевые слова: кросс-культурное исследование, Хофстеде, культура, конкурентоспособность путешествий.

Introduction

With the continuous growth in the tourism sector and the rise in disposable income, individuals are increasingly allocating more resources to their travel and tourism plans (Croes et al., 2020). This trend has led to heightened competition among various countries, prompting nations to actively explore innovative strategies to attract tourists (Chathoth et al., 2011). Specifically, travel destinations aim to establish a competitive edge to attract more tourists (Natalia et al., 2019). This results in intense competition within the travel and tourism industry, where only the most competitive destinations are likely to experience growth (Kubickova & Martin, 2020).

Scholars have recognized the crucial role of destination competitiveness in attracting tourists (Shoval & Birenboim, 2019). Countries aspiring to become favored destinations for international tourists generally invest substantial efforts in cultivating their competitive advantage (Fernández et al., 2020). While existing research in tourism and hospitality has identified various factors contributing to a destination's competitive advantage (Crouch & Ritchie, 2012), elements such as national culture have received relatively little attention in scholarly investigations. This literature proposes that a pro-

found understanding of national culture can substantially contribute to developing a competitive advantage. Advocates of this perspective argue that delving deeper into national culture allows governments and policymakers to formulate policies that are not only culturally relevant but also enhance their capacity to attract international tourists (Li & Liu, 2018). However, it is crucial to move beyond scholarly perspectives and consider concrete arguments for the relevance of “national culture” as a competitive factor.

Firstly, national culture plays a pivotal role in shaping a destination's unique identity and character. This distinctiveness can be leveraged as a competitive edge to attract tourists seeking authentic and culturally enriching experiences. Visitors are often drawn to destinations that offer a rich cultural tapestry, providing them with a deeper understanding of the local way of life, traditions, and customs.

Secondly, the appeal of national culture extends beyond superficial attractions. In today's globalized world, travelers are increasingly seeking meaningful connections and a genuine exchange with the local population. A destination that embraces and showcases its national culture can foster a more profound and authentic engagement between tourists and the community. This deeper connection contributes to a

positive and memorable visitor experience, encouraging repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

Furthermore, national culture can be a driving force for sustainable tourism development. By promoting and preserving cultural heritage, destinations can attract responsible tourists interested in supporting local communities and preserving the authenticity of the cultural landscape. Sustainable tourism practices contribute to the destination's long-term viability and visitors' overall satisfaction.

In essence, the relevance of "national culture" as a competitive factor extends beyond financial gain or profit. While attracting tourists is undoubtedly a key objective, a deeper mutual understanding of cultures becomes equally important. National culture becomes relevant for fostering connections, promoting sustainable practices, and enriching the overall tourism experience. This holistic approach benefits the destination economically and contributes to the broader goal of promoting cultural exchange and understanding between diverse societies.

The perspective presented in the given text emphasizes the importance of understanding national culture comprehensively in the context of interacting with international tourists. The argument is not solely focused on financial aspects but also extends to cultural considerations. While there is a notable concentration on the performance of the tourism and hotel industry and staff training, the overarching idea is that a nuanced appreciation of national culture is crucial for effective engagement with diverse tourists. The studies cited to support this argument primarily focus on the tourism and hotel industry's performance and staff training. Despite this concentration, the insights derived from these studies go beyond mere financial considerations. Instead, they have inspired a multifaceted approach to enhancing competitiveness in the tourism industry. This approach includes various strategies such as advertising, staff training, embracing green practices, and incorporating advanced technology (Singjai et al., 2018). In essence, the argument underscores the cultural aspect as foundational, guiding the implementation of diverse strategies to improve competitiveness and sustainable growth in the tourism industry. While financial considerations are acknowledged, the broader perspective presented in the text suggests that a nuanced understanding of national culture is essential for shaping various aspects of the industry and promoting positive interactions between visitors and destinations.

Despite these initiatives, numerous countries struggle to attain the desired competitiveness for

their destinations, potentially resulting in fewer international tourists. Scholars contend that there is a consensus on the substantial impact of national culture on destination competitiveness (Goffi et al., 2019). However, empirical support for this notion is limited. Previous literature recognizes the significance of national culture in comprehending tourists' travel behavior (Lim & Giouvriss, 2020). Nevertheless, most of these studies primarily focus on investigating the influence of national culture on travel motivations, behavioral patterns, beliefs, and perceptions (Chen et al., 2012). and concentrate on a specific country, city, or cultural context, such as Amsterdam, Turkey, St. Gallen, Europe, Milan, and Spain. (Campón-Cerro et al., 2017).

This study distinguishes itself from earlier research on destination competitiveness and contributes to literature and practice in three key ways. Firstly, unlike many previous studies that primarily focused on cost, value, safety, security, and human resources, this study uniquely emphasizes the role of culture in its empirical investigations. Secondly, prior research on destination competitiveness has typically centered on single countries as reference points. While scholars acknowledge the significance of culture in influencing destination competitiveness, empirical evidence supporting this perspective has been limited. The current study introduces a framework that can be employed to examine the association between culture and destination competitiveness across multiple countries spanning a diverse range of cultural contexts. This proposed framework and the accompanying recommendations are adaptable and can be applied or generalized to specific country contexts.

The structure of the remainder of the paper is outlined as follows: The subsequent section provides a comprehensive review of pertinent literature concerning culture and Travel and Tourism Competitiveness (TTC). The following team constructs the research model and provides an overview of the proposed hypotheses. The methodology section expounds on the research approach and succeeds by presenting results and subsequent discussion. The following section elucidates the diverse theoretical and practical implications emanating from the study. Finally, the paper concludes with a team that assesses limitations and outlines potential avenues for future research.

Culture

Culture is the culmination of distinctive behavioral patterns within a society (Scupin, 2020). Various macro-environmental elements collectively

shape these behavioral patterns, including economic, legal, political, and technological aspects (Segre, 2019). Over time, these patterns evolve into traits ingrained in the collective personality shared by many country members (Kim & McKercher, 2011). The formation of national culture is influenced by people's exposure to the history, philosophy, religion, and social values prevalent in that specific country. Nevertheless, diverse understandings exist regarding the concept of culture, leading to the absence of a unified definition. Historically, in anthropology, 'culture' was initially associated with a society's inhabitants' customs and behavioral patterns. On an aggregate level, Hofstede (2011) posits that national culture constitutes a belief system that distinguishes one group of people from another. Building upon this, Hofstede (1983) developed a cultural framework by surveying individuals across numerous countries and identifying cross-cultural differences. This cultural model was further refined by Hofstede (Minkov & Hofstede, 2012), proposing six dimensions of national culture: power distance (PD), individualism versus collectivism (IND), uncertainty avoidance (UA), masculinity versus femininity (MAS), long-term orientation versus short-term orientation (LTO), and indulgence versus restraint (INL).

The choice to adopt Hofstede's dimensions of national culture in this study is rooted in two compelling reasons, with a touch of personal preference. Firstly, scholars widely acknowledge that Hofstede's cultural model is one of the most influential and extensively utilized frameworks for comprehending national culture. My inclination towards this model stems from its robustness, validated through a comprehensive meta-analysis involving data from over 451 articles representing 49 countries (Taras et al., 2012). The results of this meta-analysis, as highlighted by Taras et al. (2012), affirm the enduring popularity of Hofstede's model and project its validity for at least the next three decades, ensuring its continued relevance in our current context.

Secondly, my preference for Hofstede's model is bolstered by the fact that he has provided cultural dimensions for many countries, resulting in a substantial and diverse dataset available for statistical analysis. As Kumar et al. (2019) advocated, this extensive dataset is deemed prudent for research, as it minimizes the risk of spurious effects and facilitates the generalization of findings. In essence, the wealth of data offered by Hofstede's cultural dimensions allows for a more comprehensive and nuanced

examination of national cultures, aligning with the study's objective of gaining a deeper understanding of cultural influences.

However, it's essential to acknowledge the dynamic nature of cultures within a country, encompassing minorities, layers, and various perspectives. While Hofstede's model provides a valuable framework, it is imperative to approach its application with a nuanced understanding, recognizing the complexity and diversity within any given nation. Moreover, I appreciate the suggestion to explore the topic of "folk psychology" as it offers an intriguing perspective that, despite being considered biased or even racist by some, can contribute valuable insights into the intricacies of cultural dynamics.

Travel and tourism competitiveness (TTC)

Competitiveness is defined as the capacity of an organization or entity to design, produce, and deliver market offerings in a manner that makes these offerings more appealing than those of its competitors. It is considered an endeavor to achieve continuous profitability, typically surpassing the industry average (Kovačević et al., 2018). Similarly, destination competitiveness is associated with the ability of a specific destination to ensure its sustainable development. More precisely, scholars contend that destination competitiveness pertains to the destination's capacity to generate and provide value while sustaining available resources and maintaining its market position relative to its competitors.

Destination competitiveness encompasses various micro and macro-environmental factors. A review of prior literature indicates that only a limited number of studies have delved into these factors, and the ones that did were often confined to a single-country context. For instance, Kozak (2007) assessed Turkey's competitive position compared to other international tourist destinations, while Clara et al. (2019) specifically examined cases in South America and Oceania. While these studies have advanced our understanding of destination competitiveness, they have yet to elucidate why specific destinations are more popular than others. Consequently, the present study seeks to offer a cultural explanation of destination competitiveness and its correlation with overall competitiveness. To achieve this, the study has adopted the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness (TTC) index to measure destinations or countries' competitiveness.

Travel and Tourism Competitiveness (TTC) is a tool designed to gauge the success of a country's travel and tourism industry on a global scale.

This competitiveness is assessed by benchmarking the TTC of multiple countries, assigning an index known as the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI). The TTCI is composed of 90 individual indicators categorized into 14 pillars, measured across four factors of competitiveness, namely: 1) infrastructure; 2) natural and cultural resources; 3) enabling environment; 4) travel and tourism policy and facilitating conditions (*The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019 Travel and Tourism at a Tipping Point*, 2019).

The World Economic Forum (WEF) estimates these indicators, pillars, and TTC values using datasets from international organizations such as the United Nations Educational, World Bank, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the World Health Organization. Additionally, the WEF collects survey data from over 16,000 business executives and leaders to incorporate into the assessment of TTC. These indicators, pillars, and factors are developed to estimate TTCs and provide a comparative understanding of various countries' travel and tourism positions.

This study opts for the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness (TTC) framework and the associated TTC Index (TTCI) for two principal reasons. Firstly, the TTC relies on a contemporary framework that undergoes regular updates. This ensures that the competitiveness assessment considers the latest travel and tourism industry trends. For instance, the World Economic Forum replaced the indicator 'coastal shelf fishing pressure' with 'fish stock status,' offering a more accurate measure of marine environmental sustainability. These updates in indicators reflect the dynamic and current nature of competitiveness.

Secondly, in recent times, scholars have incorporated the TTCI into their research on tourism and destination competitiveness. These studies attest to the suitability and applicability of the TTC index for similar research endeavors.

Methodology

While existing literature has enhanced our understanding of the relationship between national culture and tourism, it remains unclear if and how national culture contributes to a country's popularity as a tourist destination. Acknowledging the vastness of the issue at hand, it is crucial to recognize that the dynamics of mutual perception among different cultures are intricate and multifaceted. This encompasses various factors such as religion,

politics, media, and historical narratives. Cultures may diverge significantly in their approaches towards each other, leading to diverse perspectives and interpretations.

For instance, the mutual perception of cultures can be influenced by historical events, political stances, and media portrayals. Transitioning to the specific focus of the study, while existing literature has significantly contributed to our understanding of the interplay between national culture and tourism, there remains a notable gap in comprehending how national culture contributes explicitly to a country's popularity as a tourist destination. Exploring this nuanced aspect requires delving into the intricate web of cultural dynamics, encompassing not only traditional factors but also the diverse and often subjective ways in which different cultures perceive and evaluate one another. This research gap presents various challenges, including recognizing the growth potential of the tourism industry and the absence of tailored tourism policies for governments, policymakers, and tourism management organizations dependent on the tourism sector. The lack of comprehension regarding the essential role of national culture in tourist destination competitiveness poses a significant hurdle for policymakers in devising effective tourism policies to attract tourists. Therefore, gaining a clearer understanding of national culture may enhance a country's destination competitiveness.

The primary objective of the current study is to bridge the existing gap, and it formulates two overarching research questions (RQs) as follows:

RQ1: What role does national culture play in travel and tourism competitiveness (TTC)?

RQ2: How can countries be effectively grouped into clusters to recommend strategies for enhancing TTC?

To address RQ1, this study empirically investigates the relationship between different national cultural dimensions and TTC. Specifically, it employs the cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede (2011) for 73 countries. These dimensions include power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence. The TTC of each of the 73 countries is gauged using the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) provided by the World Economic Forum (WEF). The TTCI assigns an index to each country, indicating its status in terms of its effectiveness in attracting tourists. Moreover, the TTCI assesses various factors and policies related to the sustainable development of the travel and tourism

industry (Beritelli & Laesser, 2011). Utilizing the TPCI, this study identifies diverse factors and policies that enhance the tourism sector's competitiveness in any given country.

RQ2 is addressed through hierarchical cluster analysis, wherein countries are grouped based on national cultural dimensions. The study then suggests diverse strategies for improving TTC for each cluster, with these recommendations intended for tourism managers, policymakers, and governments.

The current study enhances our comprehension of the relationship between national culture and a country's Travel and Tourism Competitiveness (TTC). The findings underscore that a country's culture significantly influences TTC. Only a few studies have endeavored to grasp competitiveness by analyzing data from numerous countries. Consequently, the findings from this study expand the literature on tourism and hospitality in a significant direction. Additionally, this study delves into the practical implications of these findings, offering recommended strategies to enhance destination competitiveness for policymakers and organizations in the tourism sector.

Research model and hypotheses

The existing literature suggests that national culture might exert a more profound and enduring influence on the competitiveness of the travel and tourism industry compared to other strategies (Vergori & Arima, 2020). Similarly, cultural differences among individuals impact their information processing, perception, and motivation, consequently influencing behavioral changes in travel and tourism. Based on these insights, the present study formulates a research model to explore the relationship between national culture and Travel and Tourism Competitiveness (TTC).

Consistent with previous literature findings, the current research employs the six dimensions of the Hofstede cultural model for studying national culture. The six dimensions of Hofstede's cultural model—power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence—serve as the independent variables in the proposed research model. Simultaneously, the TTC index is designated the dependent variable (see Fig. 1).

Power distance refers to the degree to which less powerful members of society recognize and expect the unequal distribution of power. It measures the

asymmetry of societal power, with increased distance indicating autocratic leadership and centralized power. This concept of power is ingrained in the perceptions of both those at the top and those at the bottom of the hierarchy (Hofstede, 2001). In high power distance settings, restrictions exist on the free expression of ideas and movement, particularly when such activities may lead to conflicts with authorities. Moreover, countries with high power distance may struggle to grasp the perspectives of all stakeholders in the tourism industry, as direct communication with leaders or policymakers is not typically supported by high power distance. Initiatives or strategies to improve Travel and Tourism Competitiveness (TTC) must adhere to the established hierarchy, which can hinder competitiveness efforts that individuals lower in the scale propose.

On the other hand, countries with low power distance are more likely to embrace strategies to enhance competitiveness (Magnini, 2009). These countries are more responsive to proposed plans, taking prompt action due to their openness to communication between individuals and authorities (Gao et al., 2018). Therefore, the study posits the following hypothesis:

H1. The lower the power distance in a country, the higher its Travel and Tourism Competitiveness (TTC).

Individualism (versus Collectivism) refers to how individuals are integrated into groups. In an individualist culture, people prioritize individual ties, and self-interest takes precedence. This is facilitated by the considerable freedom granted to individuals in such societies. Conversely, some organizations emphasize close individual ties where people are born into collective groups, such as extended families with protected group interests. Individuals from individualist societies have more autonomy in expressing opinions or ideas than those from collectivist societies (Litvin & Kar, 2004)

Countries with individualist social structures are often more inclined to adopt diverse strategies to enhance Travel and Tourism Competitiveness (TTC) and work toward these goals individually. In contrast, collectivist societies may necessitate affirmation from all members before implementing any strategy, resulting in a time-consuming and cumbersome process. Furthermore, individualist countries welcome discussions to improve TTC and are willing to embrace newer technologies that may enhance their competitiveness. Therefore, the study formulates the following hypothesis:

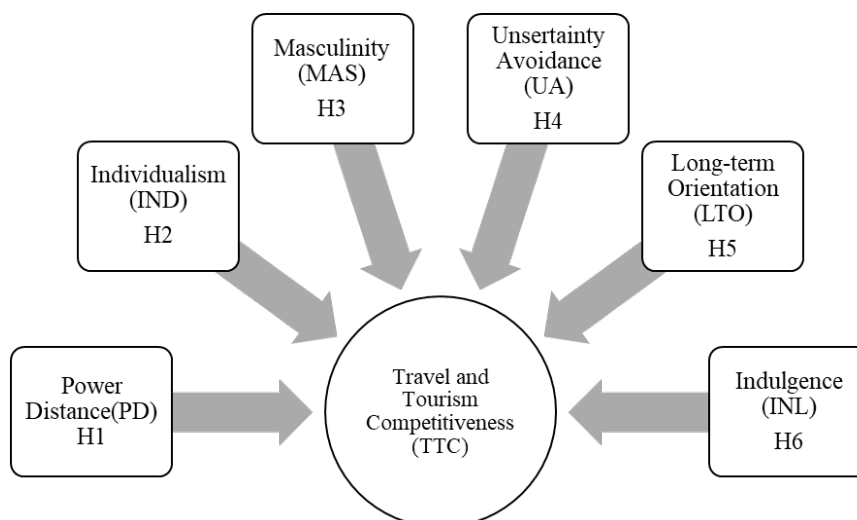


Figure 1 – Research model

H2. A positive relationship exists between high individualism in countries and Travel and Tourism Competitiveness (TTC).

The continuum between masculinity and femininity can be interpreted as the diffusion of values between males and females. Societies demonstrating an assertive or forceful nature are characterized as masculine, while those exhibiting a more nurturing or modest nature are classified as feminine. Classification into the masculine dimension suggests that the people of a country are inclined toward more aggressive and riskier actions. For instance, in masculine societies, there is a preference for settling conflicts through confrontation rather than discussion (Pizam & Fleischer, 2005). Tourists seeking adventure often appreciate a degree of risk as part of their overall travel experience. Many tourists actively seek exciting experiences, so they may be willing to engage in risk-taking activities.

Based on these considerations, the study posits the following hypothesis:

H3. A positive relationship exists between high masculinity in countries and Travel and Tourism Competitiveness (TTC).

Uncertainty avoidance is linked to a society's tolerance for ambiguity. It gauges the extent to which community members feel comfortable in unstructured situations that are new, unfamiliar, unforeseen, and deviate from the norm. Cultures with high uncertainty avoidance try to minimize the likelihood of such problems by implementing strict behavioral codes, regulations, guidelines, and condemnation of non-standard beliefs. (Hofstede, 1983) These efforts manifest in stringent safety

norms that may clash with individual freedom. The imposition of destination regulations on releasing tourists may lead to dissatisfaction, reducing their preference for popular destinations. Conversely, countries with lower levels of uncertainty avoidance may allow people to experiment since they generally have less rigid rules and policy guidelines. Goals with more lenient laws will likely cater to tourists' needs better, potentially enhancing their competitiveness. The hypothesis is thus formulated as follows:

H4. A positive relationship exists between low uncertainty avoidance in countries and Travel and Tourism Competitiveness (TTC).

Long-term and short-term orientation refers to the extent to which individuals in a society are concerned about their future. Countries whose citizens are more focused on their past are classified as having a short-term-oriented culture. In contrast, long-term-oriented societies believe that significant life events will occur in the future. This is manifested in their preference for thrift and a pattern of substantial savings. They also embrace learning from other nations and have more adaptable traditions (Hofstede, 1980). Members of long-term-oriented societies are inclined to adopt strategies from other countries to enhance competitiveness and invest in building tourism infrastructure to reap long-term benefits. Countries with long-term orientation also draw inspiration from other nations regarding travel and tourism policies, potentially contributing to improving Travel and Tourism Competitiveness (TTC). This study, therefore, formulates the following hypothesis:

H5. A positive relationship exists between

long-term orientation in countries and Travel and Tourism Competitiveness (TTC).

Indulgence refers to the orientation of a society towards the free gratification of basic desires associated with living a joyful life. Indulgent societies prioritize freedom of speech and leisure. Indulgence is considered a weaker form of control through which individuals attempt to manage their impulses and desires, with a more substantial form known as restraint (Segre, 2019). On the other hand, restrained societies are less focused on leisure time and instead control the gratification of their people's desires. Travel and tourism activities typically involve the pursuit of free gratification of experiences. Indulgent societies may view travel and tourism as fundamental rights contributing to enjoyment. These countries acknowledge and support the seeking of gratification by tourists, shaping their tourism industries accordingly. Indulgent cultures are often prevalent in South and North America, some parts

of African regions, and Western Europe, contributing significantly to international tourism (Hofstede, 2001). Based on these considerations, the study formulates the following hypothesis:

H6. A positive relationship exists between indulgence in countries and Travel and Tourism Competitiveness (TTC).

The study relies on secondary data from two primary sources: the World Economic Forum's (WEF) 2019 report on travel and tourism, which provides information on the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness (TTC) for 140 countries (World Economic Forum, 2019), and data on Hofstede's cultural dimensions for all six dimensions, obtained from Hofstede's website (Hofstede, 2019). Therefore, the complete dataset, including all cultural dimensions and competitiveness, consists of data from 73 countries (refer to Table 1). The subsequent analysis is based on this subset of 73 countries (see Table 2).

Table 1 – Descriptive Statistics on Study Variables

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std dev
TTCI	73	2.82	5.43	4.14	0.65
PD	73	18	100	61.81	20.13
IND	73	12	91	43.34	23.20
MAS	73	5	100	48.07	19.82
UA	73	8	100	65.12	21.43
LTO	73	4	100	44.07	23.72
INL	73	0	100	47.99	23.18

Note: TTCI- Travel and tourism competitiveness index, PD-Power distance, IND-Individualism, MAS- Masculinity, UA- Uncertainty avoidance, LTO- Long-term orientation, INL- Indulgence.

Table 2 – The list of 73 countries

Albania	Estonia	Luxemburg	Saudi Arabia
Argentina	Finland	Malaysia	Serbia
Australia	France	Malta	Singapore
Bangladesh	Germany	Mexico	Slovakia
Belgium	Ghana	Morocco	Slovenia
Brazil	Greece	Mozambique	South Africa
Bulgaria	Hungary	Netherlands	Spain
Canada	Iceland	New Zealand	Sweden
Cape Verde	India	Nigeria	Switzerland
Chile	Indonesia	Norway	Thailand
China	Iran	Pakistan	Trinidad and Tobago

Continuation of the table

Colombia	Ireland	Peru	Turkey
Croatia	Italy	Philippines	Ukraine
Czech Republic	Japan	Poland	United Kingdom
Denmark	Jordan	Portugal	United Republic of Tanzania
Dominican Republic	Latvia	Republic of Korea	USA
Egypt	Lebanon	Romania	Venezuela
El Salvador	Lithuania	Russian Federation	Vietnam
			Zambia

To offer more tailored strategies that may apply to countries with similar cultural backgrounds, the researchers conducted a hierarchical cluster analysis based on the cultural dimensions of the countries. Descriptive details of the components of TTC are outlined in Table 1. Since the cultural context of each country varies, segmentation into clusters enables the formulation of more culturally specific strategies.

Results

The analysis included a correlation examination between the dependent and independent variables, as outlined in Table 3. The results of the correlation analysis provide valuable insights into two key aspects. Firstly, Time to Compliance (TTC) exhibited

a significant negative correlation with power distance ($r = -0.50$, $p < 0.001$). Conversely, TTC demonstrated a meaningful positive relationship with individualism ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$) and long-term orientation ($r = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$).

Secondly, noteworthy correlations were observed among various cultural variables. Examples include the significant correlations between power distance and individualism ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.001$), power distance and uncertainty avoidance ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.05$), power distance and indulgence ($r = -0.25$, $p < 0.05$), individualism and long-term orientation ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.05$), and long-term orientation and indulgence ($r = -0.48$, $p < 0.001$), as depicted in Figure 2. These correlations align with the findings acknowledged by Hofstede (2011).

Table 3 – Descriptive summary of components of travel and tourism competitiveness

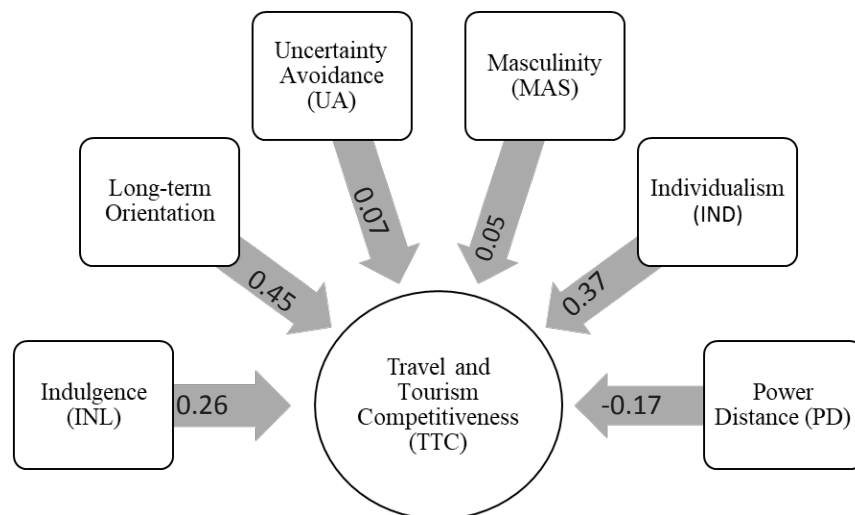
Code	Index	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std dev
TTCI	Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index	73	2.82	5.44	4.22	0.65
A	Enabling environment sub-index	73	3.15	6.21	5.08	0.72
A.01	Business environment	73	2.37	6.05	4.62	0.68
A.02	Safety and Security	73	2.97	6.70	5.38	0.86
A.03	Health and hygiene	73	1.72	6.95	5.57	1.08
A.04	Human resources and labor market	73	3.37	5.85	4.77	0.61
A.05	ICT readiness	73	2.08	6.39	5.07	0.98
B	T&T policy and conditions sub-index	73	3.59	5.15	4.55	0.33
B.06	Prioritization of Travel & Tourism	73	3.42	6.17	4.80	0.67
B.07	International Openness	73	1.61	5.53	3.70	0.80
B.08	Price competitiveness	73	3.19	6.73	5.23	0.64
B.09	Environmental sustainability	73	3.43	5.98	4.46	0.59
C	Infrastructure sub-index	73	2.16	5.78	4.06	1.01
C.10	Air transport infrastructure	73	1.78	6.64	3.69	1.19
C.11	Ground and port infrastructure	73	1.98	6.40	3.89	1.06

Continuation of the table

Code	Index	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std dev
C.12	Tourist service infrastructure	73	1.95	6.70	4.61	1.21
D	The natural and cultural resources sub-index	73	1.53	6.05	3.18	1.21
D.13	Natural resources	73	1.87	5.97	3.45	1.05
D.14	Cultural resources and business travel	73	1.05	6.96	2.91	1.61

Table 4 – Correlation analysis

	TTCI	PD	IND	MAS	UA	LTO	INL
TTCI	1						
PD	-0.50***	1					
IND	0.62	-0.72***	1				
MAS	0.05	0.22	0.03	1			
UA	-0.03	0.23*	-0.17	0.06	1		
LTO	0.43***	-0.05	0.23*	0.04	0.11	1	
INL	0.12	-0.25*	0.11	-0.01	-0.20	-0.48***	1

**Figure 2** – Results of hypothesis testing**Table 4** – Regression analysis

	Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity	Statistics
	<i>Beta</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Sig</i>	Tolerance	VIF
PD	-0.17	-1.28	p > 0.01	0.40	2.49
IND	0.37**	2.89	p < 0.05	0.42	2.38
MAS	0.05	0.60	p > 0.05	0.88	1.14
UA	0.07	0.79	p > 0.05	0.92	1.09
LTO	0.45**	4.50	p < 0.001	0.69	1.46
INL	0.26*	2.61	p < 0.05	0.69	1.46

The substantial correlation between power distance and individualism ($r=0.71$, $p < 0.001$) raised concerns about multicollinearity, as evident in Table 4. Consequently, it became necessary to assess the presence of multicollinearity within the dataset. A regression analysis was performed for this purpose. As anticipated, the high correlation among the variables indeed resulted in multicollinearity. The variance inflation factor (VIF) exceeded the generally acceptable limit of 10 (Hair, 2009), confirming the presence of multicollinearity. The data was transformed to address this issue where centering or demeaning and standardizing values were employed. This indicated that the multicollinearity was not severe, allowing the researchers to proceed with the data analysis as suggested. A concise summary of the hypothesis testing outcomes is provided in Figure 2.

The hierarchical cluster analysis revealed that countries could be categorized into four clusters on a broader scale, considering their cultural dimensions and economic growth (refer to Fig. 3). The

cultural profiles for each of these four clusters are detailed in Table 5. Group 1 countries, exemplified by Russia and Slovakia, exhibited lower individualism, a moderate long-term orientation, lower indulgence, and average Time to Compliance (TTC). In contrast, Cluster 2 countries, including the Dominican Republic and Tanzania, demonstrated the lowest individualism, lower long-term orientation, and lower indulgence.

The cultural profile of Cluster 3 countries, represented by Brazil and Spain, featured moderate individualism, long-term orientation, and indulgence characteristics. Notably, countries in Cluster 3 displayed the highest TTC among all the clusters. Cluster 4 countries, such as Switzerland and the Netherlands, revealed heightened individualism, moderate long-term orientation, moderate indulgence, and higher TTC. Given that the factors influencing tourism development can vary significantly from one country to another, each country requires a distinct set of strategies to enhance its Time to Compliance (TTC).

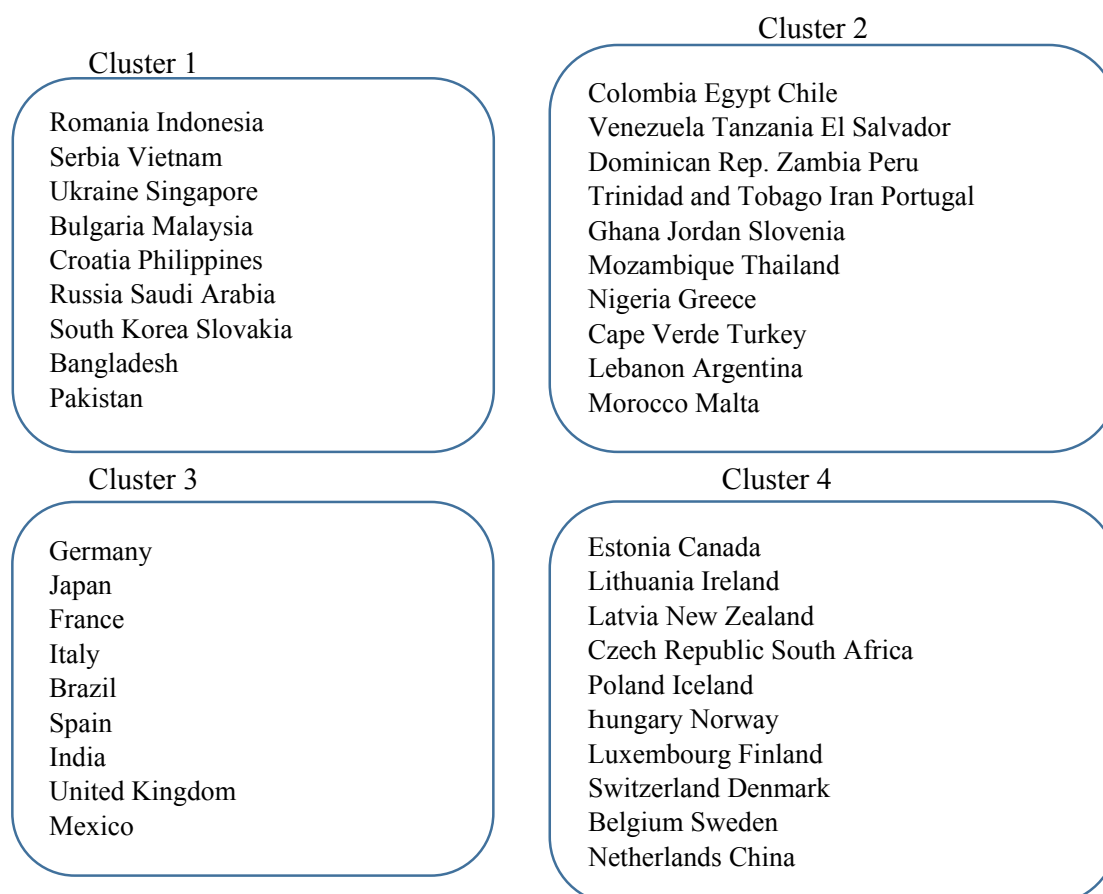


Figure 3 – Results of the hierarchical cluster analysis

Table 5 – Cultural profile (Mean value) of clusters

Cluster	PD	IND	MAS	UA	LTO	INL	TTCI
Cluster 1	82	26	51	66	59	29	3.86
Cluster 2	7	10	11	17	11	20	0.41
Cluster 3	58	57	62	71	57	51	4.97
Cluster 4	41	68	43	56	52	52	4.49

Note: TTCI- Travel and tourism competitiveness index, PD-Power distance, IND-Individualism, MAS- Masculinity, UA- Uncertainty avoidance, LTO- Long-term orientation, INL- Indulgence.

Discussion

This study examines the outcomes of the hierarchical cluster analysis and outlines strategies to enhance the Time to Compliance (TTC) for each cluster. The cluster analysis yielded four distinct clusters, as illustrated in Figure 3. Countries falling into Cluster 1 (e.g., Slovakia, Croatia, Bulgaria) typically exhibited lower individualism, moderate long-term orientation, lower indulgence, and an average TTC index. To bolster competitiveness, it is recommended that Cluster 1 countries concentrate on reinforcing their long-term exposure.

Governments of Cluster 1 countries could initiate campaigns to educate the public about TTC's long-term advantages. Given that Cluster 1 countries generally have lower per capita income, managers seeking improvement should design travel packages to encourage short but frequent local or international travel. Considering the collectivist nature of many Cluster 1 countries, travel and tourism campaigns should highlight how the benefits of such activities can enhance the lives of friends and family. Additionally, these campaigns should emphasize the societal desirability and acceptance of certain types of travel, such as religious pilgrimages, encouraging people to participate in these activities to contribute to both TTC and the overall growth of tourism.

Cluster 2 countries, including Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt, exhibited lower individualism, long-term orientation, indulgence, and the lowest Time to Compliance (TTC). To enhance their TTC, these countries should consider implementing participation programs. For instance, designing tourist packages that involve soliciting preferred combinations of tourism destinations from individuals and offering tailored packages could be beneficial. Moreover, managers and policymakers can initiate campaigns to encourage increased use of technology, aiming to improve individualism within society. This can be

accomplished by portraying travel and tourism as inherent and essential human desires linked to enjoying life and pursuing fun.

Examining the cultural profile of Cluster 3 countries, including Japan, France, Spain, and Germany, reveals moderate individualism, indulgence, and long-term orientation. Despite having the highest Time to Compliance (TTC) among all clusters, Cluster 3 countries can enhance their individualism and long-term exposure through targeted educational campaigns. Managers can create travel packages that cultivate individualism and long-term orientations. Policymakers can also devise policies to promote public participation and motivate individuals to engage in travel activities.

Countries in Cluster 4, including the Netherlands, Sweden, and Norway, showcased a heightened level of individualism alongside moderate levels of long-term orientation and indulgence. With higher Time to Compliance (TTC), Cluster 4 nations can enhance their competitiveness by emphasizing individualism. A successful approach to diminishing power distance involves adopting travel and tourism policies that mandate mobile devices, the internet, and social media. This facilitates the unrestricted flow of information, contributing to the decentralization of power and bolstering individualism.

H1 suggested a negative correlation between high power distance and TTC, but the study's results did not align with this hypothesis. This contradicted the World Economic Forum's (2019) conclusions, which implied a negative link between high power distance and TTC, as illustrated in Figure 3. For instance, countries with high power distance, like Mozambique, Nigeria, and Bangladesh, tended to have lower rankings in TTC. In contrast, those with more downward power distance, such as New Zealand, Denmark, and Ireland, were ranked higher in TTC, according to Hofstede (2019) and the World Economic Forum (2019).

Several factors could explain the absence of a discernible association. Firstly, the diminishing power asymmetry may play a role, as technological advancements and widespread internet use have reduced individuals' need to interact with authorities to accomplish tasks, as Sunny et al. (2019) noted, such as obtaining government approval for initiating a tourism agency. Additionally, the prevalence of technology and social media has empowered individuals, leading them to perceive power in authorities and within themselves, as observed by Rydén, Hossain, Skare, and Morrison (2020).

Another contributing factor is the decentralization of power in contemporary organizations and societies. The shift from hierarchical structures, where power was concentrated among a select few, towards a preference for flat structures (Segre, 2019) suggests that top hierarchy members no longer wield the same level of influence. Furthermore, societal skepticism towards authorities, as discussed by Bauman (2013) and Cohen, Duberley, and Smith (2019), including doubts about the benefits of authorities' actions on individuals and society, extends to the development of the tourism industry.

These transformative changes are evident in the study's results, where a significant correlation between power distance and TTC was not established.

H2 predicted a positive association between individualism and Time to Compliance (TTC), and the study results substantiated this hypothesis. This implies that countries exhibiting higher levels of individualism tended to demonstrate enhanced TTC. Notably, countries with elevated TTC, such as the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada, were also characterized by high levels of individualism, as indicated by Hofstede (2019) and the World Economic Forum (2019). These nations, ranking higher in individualism, predominantly belonged to the developed world with a correspondingly high per capita income.

One conceivable explanation for this positive correlation lies in the robust infrastructure and financial capacity of the populations in these countries. The latter facilitates international travel and tourism, while developed countries typically possess well-established infrastructure supporting travel and tourism, coupled with systematic investments that enhance their competitiveness. Additionally, the widespread availability of technology and resources, characteristic of many individualistic countries (Kumar et al., 2019), could contribute to this positive relationship.

Although prior studies explicitly addressing the relationship between individualism and TTC

are limited, the current study's findings align with those from other domains. For instance, Nazarian et al. (2017) discovered a positive and significant connection between individualism and organizational culture in tourism and hospitality. This suggests involving people in decision-making can yield more impactful outcomes in developing favorable policies.

The study did not find support for hypothesis H3, which posited a relationship between Time to Compliance (TTC) and masculinity. This unexpected result challenges conventional expectations, as masculine societies are typically characterized by competitiveness and a drive for success, according to Hofstede (2011). The absence of a connection between masculinity and competitiveness lacks an apparent explanation, indicating the need for further research to delve into this issue. Although consistent with non-significant findings reported by Nazarian et al. (2017), past studies did not explore or speculate on potential reasons for this lack of association. Therefore, future research endeavors could employ qualitative designs to uncover the underlying factors contributing to the non-significant associations.

H4 anticipated a relationship between uncertainty avoidance and TTC, but the study's findings did not support this hypothesis. Contrary to the expectation that uncertainty-avoidance countries seek innovative ways to attract tourists, potentially making destinations more market-oriented (Crouch & Ritchie, 2012), the study did not observe this trend. One possible explanation is that the countries under examination were not actively exploring new strategies to attract tourists. Alternatively, these countries might employ modern methods that the target tourists are either unaware of or not stimulated by. The absence of any discernible association between uncertainty avoidance and TTC necessitates a more comprehensive exploration of the dynamics of this relationship.

H5 proposed a positive relationship between long-term orientation and Time to Compliance (TTC), a hypothesis that found support in the study's results. This suggests that countries with long-term orientation tend to exhibit improved TTC, as they can foresee the advantages of sustaining a thriving tourism industry. Illustratively, countries with high TTC, such as Japan, South Korea, China, and Belgium, were also positioned higher in long-term orientation, according to Hofstede (2019) and the World Economic Forum (2019).

Moreover, countries with a long-term orientation typically boasted a per capita income higher than the world average. This economic context enables these

nations to invest strategically in the tourism and hospitality sector, anticipating long-term benefits. For instance, developing tourism and hospitality infrastructure designed to meet future demands will likely enhance the competitiveness index for travel and tourism.

H6 posited a positive relationship between indulgence and Time to Compliance (TTC), and the study's findings supported this hypothesis. This suggests that countries characterized by higher levels of indulgence are likely to demonstrate greater TTC. For instance, countries such as Sweden and New Zealand, which exhibit high levels of indulgence, were ranked higher in TTC, according to Hofstede (2019) and the World Economic Forum (2019).

One plausible explanation for this significant positive association is the concept of free gratification. In countries with high levels of indulgence, individuals view free gratification as a fundamental right. This perspective encourages active participation in various activities, including travel and tourism. Such active engagement creates demands for the development of infrastructure and related facilities, ultimately contributing to improved TTC. Consequently, the study's findings suggest that novel initiatives aimed at enhancing TTC are well-received by individuals who actively participate in ensuring the success of these initiatives.

Conclusion

The cultural fabric of a country stands out as a crucial factor influencing the evolution of its tourism industry. As emerging tourist destinations become more prevalent, countries must comprehend their national culture and formulate strategies tailored to their diverse cultural dimensions. National culture holds sway over a destination's Time to Compliance (TTC), as existing literature posits a profound connection between culture and the competitiveness of travel and tourism. Despite this theoretical linkage, limited empirical evidence exists to substantiate this assertion. Addressing this gap, this study pursued two research questions (RQs). RQ1 delved into the influence of national culture on TTC, marking the first empirical endeavor to explore the relationship between TTC and six cultural dimensions—power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence—across 73 countries. RQ2 aimed to furnish a cultural rationale for a country's TTC. In responding to this

question, the study conducted a cluster analysis, categorizing countries into four distinct clusters, each accompanied by strategies for enhancing TTC.

The findings presented in this paper are noteworthy for several reasons. Firstly, this study breaks new ground by examining the relationship between Time to Compliance (TTC) and culture, leveraging data from 73 countries, an unprecedented approach in previous research. Secondly, individualism, long-term orientation, and indulgence are pivotal cultural dimensions favoring TTC. Thirdly, this study contributes value to the literature on destination competitiveness, TTC, and cultural theory. Finally, the results underscore specific strategies governments, policymakers, and managers can adopt to enhance TTC. The conclusions and implications drawn from the study's findings shed light on causative factors influencing the success or failure of TTC and suggest remedial steps that individual countries can take to improve their travel and tourism competitiveness.

The current empirical study acknowledges several significant limitations that warrant consideration in future research endeavors. Firstly, despite its comprehensive nature, which involved data from 73 countries, the study encounters the challenge of generalizability. Recognizing that each country harbors a mosaic of cultures, subcultures, and sometimes non-mainstream cultures is crucial, making it difficult to speak definitively of a singular national culture. Consequently, caution is advised against indiscriminately applying the study's findings to nations not included in its scope.

Moreover, the study recognizes the constraint in generalizing findings to enhance the destination competitiveness of a specific country. To address this limitation, the study recommends that future research endeavors adopt a more inclusive approach, encompassing a broader array of countries. This expansion aims to facilitate findings with greater applicability across diverse cultural contexts, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of national cultures and their various nuances.

Additionally, the study suggests that future investigations delve into factors such as word of mouth, intentions to recommend, consumption values, economic growth, and specific cultural variables unique to each country. This comprehensive exploration seeks to enrich the understanding of Time to Compliance (TTC) by considering a broader spectrum of influences and nuances inherent in the diverse cultural landscapes of different nations.

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