

Integrating Social, Economic and Environmental Dimensions in Sustainable Tourism Management: A Systematic Literature Review of Community-Based Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable tourism requires the balanced integration of social, economic, and environmental dimensions to ensure long-term destination viability. Despite growing interest, few studies comprehensively examine how these dimensions interact to support holistic tourism sustainability. This study aims to synthesize existing literature to explore the interrelations among social engagement, economic development, and environmental conservation in sustainable tourism. A systematic literature review was conducted on 15 peer-reviewed studies published between 2015 and 2026 from Scopus and Sinta-indexed journals. The findings show that community participation enhances cultural preservation, social cohesion, and stakeholder collaboration. Economic outcomes, including employment, entrepreneurship, and equitable revenue distribution, are strengthened when aligned with participatory governance and environmental responsibility. Environmental conservation is most effective when supported by local engagement and sustainable economic practices. The study concludes that sustainable tourism management benefits from a holistic approach integrating social, economic, and environmental dimensions simultaneously. Policy and managerial implications highlight the importance of participatory governance, sustainable resource use, and community empowerment to achieve long-term resilience. Future research should examine longitudinal impacts and comparative regional studies to identify best practices for integrated sustainability.



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INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism has emerged as a central theme in global tourism development agendas, driven by growing awareness that tourism activities can yield significant benefits for local communities, economies, and environments, but can also cause profound harm when poorly managed (Nurwahyuliningsih et al., 2024). Historically, tourism development tended to prioritize economic growth, often at the expense of social equity and environmental protection. However, the paradigm has shifted toward sustainability, emphasizing the necessity of balancing economic performance with social inclusion and ecological stewardship. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) recognizes sustainable tourism as a development pathway that contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production) (UNWTO, 2018). This broad framework has prompted scholars and practitioners to examine how tourism systems can integrate multiple sustainability dimensions to foster holistic and resilient destinations.

The integration of social, economic, and environmental dimensions is essential for ensuring that tourism contributes positively to local communities, preserves cultural heritage, and protects natural resources (Abreu et al., 2024). Social sustainability in tourism involves community participation, equitable access to opportunities, and the preservation of cultural identity (Ibanescu et al., 2020). It emphasizes the importance of including local voices in tourism decision-making, not merely as stakeholders but as co-creators of tourism value. Socially sustainable tourism practices seek to mitigate negative social impacts such as cultural commodification, displacement, and loss of social cohesion, while enhancing community well-being and cultural resilience (Ilhami & Salahudin, 2021). In many rural destinations, for example, community-based tourism (CBT) models have been implemented to empower local residents, improve governance structures, and ensure that tourism proceeds are distributed fairly (Hutnaleontina et al., 2022).

Economic sustainability focuses on generating long-term economic benefits without causing harm to society or the environment. This involves fostering income generation, entrepreneurship, and equitable distribution of tourism revenues, which help reduce dependency on external operators and support inclusive growth (Permadi et al., 2025). Tourism can serve as a critical engine for economic development, especially in regions with limited industrial bases. For instance, CBT programs in Indonesian village tourism have demonstrated that local ownership of tourism enterprises, such as homestays, artisan crafts, and guiding services, can secure sustained income flows and reduce economic leakage (Susanto & Ridwan, 2025). However, economic sustainability is not solely about income; it also includes resilience against market fluctuations, diversification of livelihoods, and investment in human capital. Sustainable tourism enterprises that adopt fair trade principles, local hiring practices, and reinvestment into community services contribute to broader economic empowerment (Cazan, 2018).

Environmental sustainability, meanwhile, is concerned with conserving ecosystems, managing waste, and ensuring responsible resource use to maintain long-term ecological integrity



(Hashemkhani Zolfani et al., 2015). Tourism activities often take place in sensitive natural areas such as coastal zones, forests, and mountain regions, where environmental degradation can result from unmanaged visitor flows, pollution, habitat loss, and resource overexploitation. Research has shown that integrating environmental management strategies such as eco-certification, protected area co-management, and waste reduction protocols can help reduce the ecological footprint of tourism operations (Apriliyanti & Randelli, 2020). Moreover, community participation in environmental stewardship has been shown to strengthen local conservation efforts and enhance awareness of ecological challenges (Hashemkhani Zolfani et al., 2015). For example, environmental monitoring programs led by local residents have resulted in improved waste management systems and reduced pressure on water sources in several Indonesian tourism villages (Jackson, 2025).

Although these three sustainability dimensions are widely studied individually, the literature reveals a persistent gap in research that holistically examines their integration in sustainable tourism management (Zielinski et al., 2020). Many studies focus on social participation, economic impact, or environmental protection in isolation, but few provide comprehensive frameworks that explain how these aspects interact in real-world tourism settings. This fragmentation is problematic because tourism systems are inherently interconnected: economic activities are embedded within social structures, and both depend on the integrity of the natural environment. An integrated approach acknowledges that actions taken to promote economic growth should not undermine social well-being or environmental health, and that conservation strategies should enhance, rather than inhibit, community prosperity.

The concept of *triple bottom line* (TBL) has been widely used to articulate the need for balanced attention to social, economic, and environmental outcomes. Within tourism studies, the TBL framework underscores the idea that sustainability cannot be achieved without addressing all three pillars simultaneously. Empirical research demonstrates that destinations achieving higher levels of sustainability often implement multi-dimensional strategies that promote community engagement, equitable economics, and environmental protection (Kurniawan, 2024). In community-based tourism contexts, for instance, social capital generated through collective action enhances local capacity to manage natural resources, while economic incentives provide motivation for conservation efforts (Menghayati et al., 2021). This synergy highlights the potential of integrative models to achieve more resilient and adaptive destinations.

The importance of integrated sustainable tourism management is further underscored by global challenges such as climate change, socio-economic inequality, and cultural homogenization. Climate change affects tourism destinations through rising sea levels, altered weather patterns, and increased frequency of natural disasters, which pose risks to both environmental systems and local livelihoods. Socio-economic inequality can be exacerbated when tourism development prioritizes external investment and elite interests over community needs, leading to uneven distribution of benefits and social tensions (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2026). Cultural homogenization, driven by standardized tourism products and global consumption patterns, can erode local identity and



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undermine cultural authenticity. These challenges necessitate integrated strategies that are sensitive to local contexts and capable of producing equitable outcomes.

Despite the recognized importance of integration, operationalizing holistic sustainable tourism management remains challenging. Institutional barriers, limited financial resources, and insufficient stakeholder collaboration often hinder efforts to implement integrated policies (Susanto & Ridwan, 2025). Governance frameworks are frequently criticized for being siloed, with separate agencies responsible for tourism, environment, and economic development, leading to fragmentation and policy incoherence. Moreover, local communities may lack the technical expertise or organizational capacity to fully participate in decision-making processes, limiting the effectiveness of participatory approaches (Ilhami & Salahudin, 2021).

Despite extensive studies on individual sustainability dimensions, there is limited integrative synthesis explaining how social, economic, and environmental dimensions interact within Community-Based Tourism (CBT)-based tourism management frameworks. Previous systematic literature reviews have mainly examined sustainability indicators, governance structures, or economic impacts separately, leaving a research gap in understanding holistic triple bottom line integration in CBT contexts. Therefore, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) How are social, economic, and environmental dimensions integrated in sustainable tourism management frameworks? (2) What roles does Community-Based Tourism play in facilitating the integration of these dimensions? and (3) What strategies and challenges are identified in implementing holistic sustainable tourism? The original contribution of this review lies in providing an integrative synthesis of triple bottom line dimensions within CBT-based tourism management and offering conceptual and practical insights for policymakers, practitioners, and future researchers.

Given these realities, this study aims to review and synthesize existing research on the integration of social, economic, and environmental aspects within sustainable tourism management. The objectives of this review are threefold: (1) to identify key strategies that promote integrated sustainability in tourism, (2) to examine how social, economic, and environmental dimensions interact and reinforce each other in sustainable tourism frameworks, and (3) to provide insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to implement holistic sustainable tourism approaches. By synthesizing evidence from multiple contexts and research traditions, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of sustainable tourism that transcends disciplinary boundaries.

METHODS

This study employed a systematic literature review to examine the integration of social, economic, and environmental aspects in sustainable tourism management. Peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2026 were collected from international databases including Scopus, Web of Science, Taylor & Francis Online, MDPI, and SINTA-indexed journals to ensure relevance and quality. The screening process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. Initially, articles were identified through database



searches, and duplicate records were removed. Titles and abstracts were screened to assess relevance to sustainable tourism and the integration of social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Full-text articles were subsequently reviewed to confirm their alignment with the research objectives, and disagreements during screening were resolved through discussion among the authors.

Selection criteria focused on studies addressing sustainable tourism with explicit attention to social, economic, and environmental dimensions, particularly within Community-Based Tourism (CBT) contexts. Inclusion criteria comprised peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2026, written in English, indexed in the selected databases, and providing empirical or conceptual discussions on sustainability integration. Exclusion criteria included conference papers, book chapters, non-peer-reviewed articles, studies unrelated to tourism sustainability, and articles without explicit discussion of at least one sustainability dimension.

Data coding and thematic analysis were conducted using a qualitative synthesis approach. Each selected article was coded based on key themes, including social sustainability, economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, governance mechanisms, and integration strategies. Thematic synthesis was performed in three stages: (1) open coding to identify recurring concepts, (2) axial coding to group related codes into categories, and (3) selective coding to develop overarching themes and a conceptual framework explaining the integration of sustainability dimensions. Data extraction focused on research objectives, methodology, key findings, and strategies for integrating sustainability dimensions. Thematic synthesis was applied to identify patterns, interactions, and gaps among the social, economic, and environmental aspects, providing a comprehensive understanding of integrated sustainable tourism practices. Ethical considerations were maintained through proper citation, transparency in methodology, and acknowledgment of all sources, while no primary data collection involving human or animal subjects was conducted, so ethical approval was not required.

RESULTS

1. Social Sustainability in Tourism Management

Community engagement and participatory governance are fundamental for achieving social sustainability in tourism development (Cazan, 2018). Involving local populations in planning, decision-making, and management ensures that cultural heritage is preserved and traditional practices are maintained, which strengthens the identity of the destination (Susanto & Ridwan, 2025). Active participation fosters a sense of ownership among residents, enabling them to monitor tourism impacts and provide feedback on policy or operational adjustments (Nurwahyuliningsih et al., 2024). By including local voices, tourism projects gain social legitimacy, reducing the risk of conflicts or resistance from the community (Abreu et al., 2024). Participation also encourages knowledge sharing and capacity building, where residents acquire skills in hospitality, cultural interpretation, and environmental stewardship (Jackson, 2025). Moreover, social sustainability is reinforced when community involvement is supported by institutional structures, local leadership, and monitoring mechanisms that ensure tourism initiatives remain aligned with community values



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and social priorities (Cazan, 2018). In the long term, this approach strengthens social cohesion, builds trust among stakeholders, and enhances the community's resilience against socio-economic and environmental shocks (Susanto & Ridwan, 2025)

2. Economic Sustainability

Economic sustainability in tourism revolves around generating income, fostering entrepreneurship, and providing stable local employment opportunities (Hutnaleontina et al., 2022). Community-based tourism ensures that residents are directly involved in operations such as homestays, guiding services, handicrafts, food services, and cultural performances, enabling them to capture a larger share of tourism revenues (Permadi et al., 2025). Revenue generated through tourism can be reinvested into local infrastructure, education, and healthcare, promoting holistic community development (Menghayati et al., 2021). By providing equitable economic benefits, CBT reduces reliance on external investors or tour operators, fostering inclusive growth and long-term economic independence for the community (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2026). Integrating economic strategies with social and environmental initiatives ensures that tourism development does not compromise community welfare or ecological health (Kurniawan, 2024). Furthermore, tourism-driven entrepreneurship encourages innovation in local products and services, enhancing competitiveness while simultaneously preserving cultural authenticity (Ibanescu et al., 2020). Economic sustainability is maximized when financial planning aligns with local priorities, community needs, and the preservation of natural and cultural assets that attract visitors (Hutnaleontina et al., 2022).

3. Environmental Sustainability

Effective environmental sustainability in tourism depends on community participation and stewardship (Apriliyanti & Randelli, 2020). Residents engaged in CBT are more likely to adopt sustainable practices such as proper waste management, resource conservation, reforestation, and protection of biodiversity (Hashemkhani Zolfani et al., 2015). Programs that combine economic incentives with environmental stewardship motivate communities to maintain high ecological standards while generating income through eco-tourism or cultural tourism initiatives (Apriliyanti & Randelli, 2020). Case studies in Indonesian villages, including Sukunan, illustrate how CBT initiatives can improve environmental quality, including organized waste disposal, protection of water sources, and reduction of pollution from tourism activities (Hutnaleontina et al., 2022). Empowering communities as environmental stewards also increases awareness of ecological challenges and promotes long-term commitment to conservation objectives (Jackson, 2025). Moreover, when local residents perceive that their livelihoods are tied to the health of their natural resources, they are more likely to implement sustainable practices that prevent degradation while maintaining tourism benefits (Kurniawan, 2024). Environmental sustainability is therefore most effective when economic, social, and governance dimensions are considered alongside conservation efforts (Hashemkhani Zolfani et al., 2015).



4. Integration of Social, Economic, and Environmental Aspects

Research shows that the highest sustainability outcomes are achieved when social, economic, and environmental strategies are implemented in a coordinated, synergistic manner (Sharpley & Telfer, 2015). Integrated community-based tourism initiatives promote cultural preservation, equitable economic development, and ecological protection simultaneously (Abreu et al., 2024). Stakeholder collaboration, strong local leadership, and supportive governance structures are crucial to managing these interconnected dimensions effectively (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2026). Without integration, tourism projects may deliver short-term economic gains but fail to sustain social well-being or environmental health (Hutnaleontina et al., 2022). Continuous monitoring and adaptive management allow communities and policymakers to adjust practices based on changing environmental conditions, tourist behavior, or economic factors, ensuring resilience and long-term sustainability (Jackson, 2025). Integrated strategies also facilitate knowledge sharing, conflict resolution, and innovation in sustainable tourism products and services, strengthening both the community's capacity and the destination's competitiveness (Kurniawan, 2024). Ultimately, the integration of these three dimensions demonstrates that sustainable tourism is not just an economic activity but a holistic approach that balances human, financial, and ecological priorities (Abreu et al., 2024).

Table 1. Main Findings Synthesis of Social, Economic and Environmental

Sustainability Dimension	Key Findings	Supporting Studies
Social Sustainability	Community participation enhances governance, cultural preservation, and social cohesion	Cazan (2018); Abreu et al. (2024); Susanto & Ridwan (2025)
Economic Sustainability	CBT increases local income, entrepreneurship, and equitable revenue distribution	Hutnaleontina et al. (2022); Permadi et al. (2025); Nguyen & Nguyen (2026)
Environmental Sustainability	Community stewardship improves waste management, biodiversity protection, and resource conservation	Apriliyanti & Randelli (2020); Hashemkhani Zolfani et al. (2015); Kurniawan (2024)
Integrated Sustainability	Coordinated strategies enhance resilience and long-term destination sustainability	Sharpley & Telfer (2015); Abreu et al. (2024)

The literature consistently reports that sustainable tourism outcomes are strengthened when social, economic, and environmental strategies are implemented in a coordinated manner (Sharpley & Telfer, 2015). Integrated CBT initiatives are associated with simultaneous improvements in cultural preservation, economic development, and environmental protection (Abreu et al., 2024). Governance structures, stakeholder collaboration, and local leadership are identified as enabling factors for integration (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2026). Several studies emphasize that lack of integration may result in short-term economic gains without sustained social or environmental benefits



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(Hutnaleontina et al., 2022). Adaptive management and continuous monitoring are also reported as mechanisms for maintaining resilience and long-term sustainability (Jackson, 2025).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that community-based tourism (CBT) plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable tourism by integrating social, economic, and environmental dimensions (Abreu et al., 2024). Social sustainability is achieved when local communities actively participate in decision-making, cultural preservation, and governance processes, which aligns with previous studies emphasizing the importance of community engagement in tourism planning (Cazan, 2018). Active participation not only strengthens social cohesion but also empowers communities to monitor tourism impacts and negotiate equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms (Susanto & Ridwan, 2025). These results support the hypothesis that meaningful community involvement enhances social legitimacy and long-term sustainability of tourism initiatives (Nurwahyuliningsih et al., 2024).

Economic sustainability is reinforced when tourism activities generate income, foster entrepreneurship, and provide stable local employment opportunities (Hutnaleontina et al., 2022). The findings demonstrate that CBT initiatives integrating local residents into tourism operations, such as homestays, guiding services, and handicraft production, help retain economic benefits within the community, reducing dependency on external investors (Permadi et al., 2025). This result corroborates prior research showing that linking economic opportunities with cultural and environmental preservation creates a virtuous cycle, ensuring long-term viability of tourism destinations (Menghayati et al., 2021). The study confirms that integrating economic planning with social and environmental strategies enhances the resilience and adaptive capacity of communities to market fluctuations and environmental shocks (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2026).

Environmental sustainability emerges as a significant outcome of CBT, where residents engage in resource management, waste reduction, and conservation practices (Apriliyanti & Randelli, 2020). These findings support previous studies that highlight the role of community stewardship in protecting ecosystems and promoting responsible tourism behavior (Hashemkhani Zolfani et al., 2015). Moreover, the research indicates that combining economic incentives with environmental stewardship motivates communities to maintain ecological quality while generating income, consistent with studies advocating for integrated sustainable tourism approaches (Jackson, 2025). Engaging local communities in environmental management also fosters ecological awareness and long-term commitment to conservation objectives, reinforcing the hypothesis that sustainability is multi-dimensional (Kurniawan, 2024).

The results further emphasize that the greatest sustainability outcomes are achieved when social, economic, and environmental aspects are implemented in a coordinated and synergistic manner (Sharpley & Telfer, 2015). Integrated CBT initiatives allow communities to simultaneously preserve culture, generate equitable economic benefits, and protect the environment, demonstrating that holistic approaches outperform isolated interventions (Abreu et al., 2024). Effective governance, stakeholder collaboration, and continuous monitoring are critical to managing these



interdependencies, supporting prior findings that multi-stakeholder coordination is essential for sustainable tourism (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2026).

However, the integration of social, economic, and environmental dimensions often involves trade-offs. Economic development through tourism may increase local income and employment opportunities but can also lead to environmental degradation and socio-cultural disruptions. Conversely, strict environmental conservation measures may limit economic activities and community income, indicating the need for adaptive and balanced governance frameworks.

Although CBT provides a participatory framework for sustainable tourism, its implementation faces several limitations. These include limited community capacity, unequal power relations among stakeholders, insufficient financial resources, and weak institutional support. In some cases, local communities have limited decision-making authority, which may reduce the effectiveness of CBT as a governance model for sustainability.

These findings have important implications for policymakers and practitioners. First, tourism planning should prioritize participatory governance and community empowerment to achieve social sustainability (Cazan, 2018). Second, economic strategies must be designed to ensure equitable distribution of benefits while reinforcing cultural and environmental protection (Hutnaleontina et al., 2022). Third, environmental management should be integrated into tourism operations, with local communities as active stakeholders to ensure long-term conservation and resilience (Apriliyanti & Randelli, 2020).

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to sustainable tourism literature by providing an integrative conceptual synthesis that explains how social, economic, and environmental dimensions interact within CBT-based tourism management frameworks. By extending the triple bottom line paradigm through a CBT lens, this review offers a holistic framework for future empirical and conceptual research on integrated sustainable tourism governance.

Future research should explore the dynamic interactions among social, economic, and environmental dimensions, including potential trade-offs and synergies (Kurniawan, 2024). Longitudinal studies could examine how CBT interventions impact community welfare over time, while comparative studies between regions could identify best practices and scalable strategies for integrated sustainable tourism (Jackson, 2025). Additionally, research could investigate the role of digital technologies in enhancing community participation, monitoring, and environmental management to further support sustainability objectives (Susanto & Ridwan, 2025).

In summary, the results highlight that CBT is an effective framework for achieving multi-dimensional sustainable tourism outcomes. Social empowerment, equitable economic benefits, and environmental stewardship are interlinked, and their integration is essential for long-term resilience and community welfare. These findings reinforce prior literature and provide practical guidance for designing, implementing, and evaluating sustainable tourism initiatives at local and regional levels (Abreu et al., 2024).



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Despite providing valuable insights, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the systematic literature review relied on secondary data from selected academic databases, which may have excluded relevant studies published in non-indexed journals, local repositories, or grey literature. Second, the review focused primarily on studies discussing community-based tourism and integrated sustainability dimensions, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other tourism development models. Third, the thematic synthesis approach, while useful for identifying patterns and interactions among social, economic, and environmental dimensions, may involve a degree of subjective interpretation in coding and theme categorization. Finally, the absence of empirical field data means that the findings are conceptual and depend on the quality and context of the reviewed studies, which may vary across regions and methodological designs.

This study contributes theoretically to sustainable tourism literature by integrating the triple bottom line (TBL) framework with community-based tourism perspectives, providing a holistic conceptualization of sustainable tourism management. It advances existing theories by demonstrating how social, economic, and environmental dimensions interact dynamically rather than functioning as isolated pillars. Furthermore, this review synthesizes multi-disciplinary findings into an integrative framework that highlights the role of governance, stakeholder collaboration, and community empowerment as key mediating mechanisms in sustainable tourism outcomes. By bridging fragmented empirical findings, this study extends theoretical understanding of integrated sustainability and offers a structured basis for future empirical and theoretical research in sustainable tourism studies.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has examined the integration of social, economic, and environmental dimensions within sustainable tourism management through the lens of Community-Based Tourism (CBT). The results indicate that social sustainability is strengthened when local communities actively participate in tourism planning and decision-making, preserving cultural heritage, enhancing social cohesion, and increasing social legitimacy of tourism initiatives (Cazan, 2018). Economic sustainability is achieved when tourism provides equitable income generation, entrepreneurship opportunities, and employment, fostering inclusive growth while reducing dependency on external operators (Hutnaleontina et al., 2022). Environmental sustainability is promoted through community engagement in resource management, conservation practices, and ecological stewardship, ensuring that tourism activities do not compromise the natural environment (Apriliyanti & Randelli, 2020).

The findings demonstrate that the greatest sustainability outcomes occur when these three dimensions are implemented synergistically, highlighting the importance of integrated and holistic tourism management (Sharpley & Telfer, 2015). CBT emerges as a comprehensive framework that simultaneously supports local welfare, cultural preservation, and environmental protection. These results are consistent with previous literature emphasizing multi-dimensional sustainability and the



role of community participation, economic integration, and environmental stewardship in achieving sustainable tourism (Abreu et al., 2024; Susanto & Ridwan, 2025).

The study also provides prospects for future application. Policymakers and tourism practitioners are encouraged to adopt participatory governance models, equitable economic strategies, and community-led environmental programs to achieve sustainable tourism objectives. Further research could explore longitudinal impacts of CBT, digital tools for community engagement, and comparative studies across different regions to identify best practices for integrated sustainable tourism strategies (Jackson, 2025; Kurniawan, 2024).

In conclusion, CBT is a powerful mechanism for realizing sustainable tourism. Its implementation ensures that social, economic, and environmental benefits are maximized collectively, contributing to long-term resilience, community welfare, and responsible tourism development.

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