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The Influence of Brand Image and Food Quality on Customer Loyalty: A Comparative Analysis of Sushi Tei as Market Leader and Genki Sushi as Market Challenger

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of Brand Image and Food Quality on Customer Loyalty through a comparative analysis between the market leader (Sushi Tei) and the market challenger (Genki Sushi) in the Japanese restaurant industry. Drawing upon branding and consumer behaviour theories, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape customer loyalty and to identify whether loyalty levels differ between leading and competing restaurant brands. An explanatory quantitative approach was employed using survey data collected from 150 customers of Sushi Tei and Genki Sushi Plaza Senayan, Jakarta. The data were analysed using multiple linear regression, coefficient of determination analysis, hypothesis testing (t-test and F-test), and Independent Sample T-Test with the assistance of SPSS software. Prior to hypothesis testing, validity, reliability, and classical assumption tests were conducted to ensure data quality and model adequacy.The results indicate that Brand Image and Food Quality significantly and positively influence Customer Loyalty. Food Quality emerged as the most influential variable, highlighting the importance of taste, freshness, product safety, and overall dining experience in encouraging repeat patronage. Simultaneously, Brand Image and Food Quality explain 51.1% of the variance in Customer Loyalty, demonstrating their substantial contribution to customer retention. Furthermore, the comparative analysis reveals a significant difference in loyalty levels between Sushi Tei and Genki Sushi. Customers of Sushi Tei exhibit a significantly higher loyalty level than customers of Genki Sushi, suggesting that market leadership is associated with stronger customer attachment and brand preference.This study

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contributes to the customer loyalty literature by integrating product related and brand related determinants within a comparative market structure framework. The findings provide practical insights for restaurant managers regarding the strategic importance of maintaining strong brand positioning and consistent food quality to sustain customer loyalty in an increasingly competitive food and beverage industry.

Keywords: Brand Image, Food Quality, Customer Loyalty, Sushi Tei, Genki Sushi, Comparative Study, Restaurant Industry.

INTRODUCTION

The food and beverage (F&B) industry in Indonesia has undergone a significant transformation in recent years. Restaurants are no longer perceived merely as providers of food but have evolved into venues that deliver consumption experiences, social interactions, and lifestyle value. This transformation has been largely driven by changes in consumer behaviour, where dining activities increasingly reflect personal identity, social status, and experiential preferences rather than solely fulfilling physiological needs (Fauzi et al., 2025). Consequently, restaurant operators are required to create competitive advantages that extend beyond product offerings, including the development of memorable customer experiences and strong brand positioning.

The rapid growth of Indonesia's culinary industry has intensified competition among restaurant businesses. According to Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2025), the number of food and beverage establishments increased considerably between 2023 and 2024, reflecting the growing demand for dining experiences and the expansion of culinary businesses across the country. The increasing number of restaurants has provided consumers with a broader range of alternatives, making customer retention more challenging. As a result, consumers are becoming more likely to engage in switching behaviour, defined as the tendency to replace previously preferred service providers with alternative options perceived to offer greater value (Rawis et al., 2022). In such a competitive environment, maintaining customer loyalty has become a critical strategic objective for restaurant businesses.

Customer loyalty represents a valuable intangible asset that contributes to business sustainability through repeat purchases, customer retention, and positive word-of-mouth communication. Loyal customers tend to maintain long-term relationships with a restaurant despite the availability of competing alternatives and promotional offerings. Furthermore, loyal customers frequently act as voluntary promoters by recommending

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their preferred restaurants to friends, family members, and online communities, thereby generating organic marketing benefits for the company (Anzani & Emeilia, 2024). Accordingly, understanding the determinants of customer loyalty has become increasingly important for restaurant managers seeking sustainable competitive advantages.

Among the various restaurant segments operating in Indonesia, Japanese restaurants have experienced remarkable growth and popularity. The increasing influence of Japanese culture, combined with changing consumer preferences toward international cuisines, has contributed to the expansion of Japanese dining establishments across major Indonesian cities (Fatimah & Panjaitan, 2025). Consumers are increasingly attracted to Japanese cuisine due to its perceived quality, authenticity, aesthetic presentation, and cultural value. Previous studies indicate that customers of Japanese restaurants generally evaluate not only the taste of food but also the overall dining experience, including service quality, restaurant atmosphere, and authenticity of the culinary offerings (Purnamasari & Saptadinata, 2025).

Given the experiential nature of restaurant consumption, customer loyalty is influenced by both tangible and intangible factors. One of the most important intangible factors is brand image. Brand image refers to consumers' overall perceptions, associations, and beliefs regarding a particular brand, which are formed through accumulated experiences and interactions with the company (Satia & Budiarta, 2025). In the restaurant industry, a strong brand image can reduce perceived risk, strengthen emotional attachment, and encourage customers to repeatedly choose the same restaurant. Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that brand image positively influences customer loyalty across various restaurant settings (Destiani & Wiyata, 2026; Sudiparwati et al., 2024; Vindiana et al., 2025).

In addition to brand image, food quality remains a fundamental determinant of customer loyalty in restaurant businesses. Food quality encompasses consumers' evaluations of food freshness, presentation, taste consistency, cooking accuracy, and variety of menu offerings (Hati et al., 2023). This factor is particularly important in Japanese restaurants because many menu items rely heavily on ingredient freshness, visual presentation, and authenticity. Customers visiting Japanese restaurants generally possess high expectations regarding the quality and consistency of food served. Therefore, restaurants that consistently deliver superior food quality are more likely to develop long-term customer relationships and loyalty (Chinelato & Cruz, 2025).

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Within Indonesia's premium Japanese restaurant market, Sushi Tei and Genki Sushi represent two brands with distinct competitive positions. Sushi Tei is widely recognized as the market leader, supported by extensive outlet networks, strong brand awareness, and consistent dominance in the Top Brand Index for sushi restaurants in Indonesia. Since entering the Indonesian market in 2003, Sushi Tei has successfully established a premium brand image and become one of the most recognized Japanese restaurant brands among Indonesian consumers. The company currently operates dozens of outlets across major Indonesian cities, reflecting its strong market penetration and brand equity.

In contrast, Genki Sushi has emerged as a prominent market challenger by introducing a technology-driven dining concept that combines Japanese authenticity with interactive customer experiences. Through innovations such as tablet-based ordering systems and automated food delivery using miniature Shinkansen trains, Genki Sushi has successfully differentiated itself from competitors and attracted younger consumer segments, particularly Millennials and Generation Z. The brand emphasizes experiential dining and value-for-money offerings, positioning itself as a modern alternative within the premium Japanese restaurant market.

Despite the growing popularity of both brands, differences in customer loyalty remain observable. While Sushi Tei benefits from strong brand recognition and established market leadership, Genki Sushi offers innovative dining experiences and operational efficiency that appeal to contemporary consumers. This competitive dynamic raises an important question regarding the relative importance of brand image and food quality in shaping customer loyalty within premium Japanese restaurants.

Previous studies have extensively investigated the influence of brand image and food quality on customer loyalty in hospitality and restaurant contexts. However, most studies have focused on single-brand analyses or general restaurant settings without considering differences in competitive positioning. Limited research has examined customer loyalty determinants through a comparative perspective involving market leaders and market challengers operating within the same industry segment. Consequently, empirical evidence regarding whether customer loyalty differs significantly between dominant and emerging brands in premium Japanese restaurants remains limited.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of brand image and food quality on customer loyalty and to compare customer loyalty between Sushi Tei as the market leader and Genki Sushi as the market challenger in Indonesia. By integrating

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customer loyalty determinants with competitive positioning perspectives, this study contributes to the growing literature on restaurant marketing and provides managerial insights for Japanese restaurant operators seeking to strengthen customer loyalty in increasingly competitive markets.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies have extensively examined the determinants of customer loyalty within restaurant and food service industries. However, the majority of existing research has focused on general restaurant settings and has investigated customer loyalty through mediating mechanisms such as customer satisfaction, restaurant image, perceived value, and service quality.

Adrian & Keni (2023) demonstrated that food quality and perceived price fairness positively influence customer loyalty through customer satisfaction as a mediating variable. Similarly, (Pangestu et al., 2024) reported that food quality contributes to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty within Indonesia's fast-food industry. While these studies confirmed the importance of food-related attributes, they primarily focused on food quality and pricing dimensions without examining the direct role of brand image in shaping customer loyalty.

Other studies have emphasized product quality and service quality as determinants of customer loyalty. Hanindita & Riorini (2023) found that product quality, service quality, and customer satisfaction significantly affect customer loyalty at Pizza Hut restaurants. Similarly, Likewise, Octasylva (2023) reported significant effects of product quality, brand image, and customer satisfaction on customer loyalty among culinary SMEs. Nevertheless, these studies investigated general product quality rather than food quality as a multidimensional construct encompassing sensory attributes, nutritional value, food safety, and process credibility. Furthermore, their research contexts were limited to fast-food restaurants and culinary SMEs, which differ substantially from premium Japanese restaurant settings.

Research conducted by Hussein (2023) further highlighted the importance of food quality through the mediating role of restaurant image. Their findings revealed that service quality, food quality, and physical environment quality contribute to customer loyalty indirectly through restaurant image. Although the study provided valuable insights regarding customer loyalty formation, it focused primarily on ethnic restaurants and did not investigate the direct influence of brand image and food quality on customer loyalty.

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Despite the growing body of literature examining customer loyalty in restaurant industries, several important gaps remain. First, previous studies have predominantly analyzed food quality alongside service quality, customer satisfaction, perceived price fairness, or restaurant image, while limited research has simultaneously examined the direct influence of brand image and food quality on customer loyalty. Second, most existing studies have been conducted in general restaurant, fast-food, ethnic restaurant, or culinary SME contexts, leaving premium Japanese restaurants relatively underexplored. Third, prior research has largely employed single-brand or non-comparative approaches, resulting in limited understanding of how customer loyalty differs across brands occupying different competitive positions within the same industry.

Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by investigating the direct effects of brand image and food quality on customer loyalty within Indonesia's premium Japanese restaurant industry. More importantly, this study extends previous literature by adopting a comparative perspective between Sushi Tei as a market leader and Genki Sushi as a market challenger. By integrating customer loyalty determinants with competitive positioning perspectives, this study contributes to the restaurant marketing literature and provides a deeper understanding of loyalty formation within highly competitive premium dining markets.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a comparative research design to examine the influence of brand image and food quality on customer loyalty and to compare loyalty levels between Sushi Tei as a market leader and Genki Sushi as a market challenger. A comparative approach was considered appropriate because it enables the investigation of differences and relationships among variables across two competing brands operating within the same premium Japanese restaurant segment.

The study was conducted at Sushi Tei Plaza Senayan and Genki Sushi Plaza Senayan, Jakarta, Indonesia. Data were collected between May and June 2026. Two sources of data were utilized in this study. Primary data were obtained through structured questionnaires distributed online to restaurant customers, while secondary data were collected from academic journals, books, industry reports, and other relevant literature related to brand image, food quality, and customer loyalty.

The population of this study consisted of all customers who had previously visited Sushi Tei and Genki Sushi. Because the exact population size was unknown, a non-probability sampling method with a purposive sampling technique was employed.

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Respondents were selected based on two criteria: (1) at least 17 years old and (2) having experienced dine-in services at both Sushi Tei and Genki Sushi. Following Hair et al. (2021) the minimum sample size was determined using five respondents per measurement indicator. With a total of 35 indicators included in the research instrument, the minimum sample requirement was 150 respondents. Accordingly, a total of 150 valid responses were collected and analyzed.

This study examined three principal variables. Brand image served as the first independent variable and was measured using four dimensions adapted from (Wardhana, 2024), namely brand identity, brand personality, brand association, and brand attitude and behavior. Food quality served as the second independent variable and was measured through four dimensions adapted from Parikenan et al. (2024) and (Pramudito et al., 2025), namely sensory attributes, health and nutrition attributes, food safety attributes, and process attributes. Customer loyalty was treated as the dependent variable and was measured using three dimensions adapted from Griffin (2005), namely repeat purchase, retention, and referrals.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire consisted of 35 measurement items, including 13 items for brand image, 13 items for food quality, and 9 items for customer loyalty. Prior to hypothesis testing, the research instrument was evaluated through validity and reliability testing to ensure the adequacy of the measurement model.

The collected data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The analysis procedure consisted of instrument testing, classical assumption testing, and hypothesis testing. Instrument testing included validity and reliability assessments, while classical assumption testing comprised normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests. To examine the influence of brand image and food quality on customer loyalty, multiple linear regression analysis was employed, followed by t-tests, F-tests, and coefficient of determination (R^2) analysis. Furthermore, an Independent Sample t-Test was conducted to determine whether significant differences in customer loyalty existed between Sushi Tei and Genki Sushi customers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

This study involved 150 respondents who had visited Sushi Tei Plaza Senayan and Genki Sushi Plaza Senayan. The respondent profile indicates that the sample was

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dominated by female consumers (57.3%), respondents aged 20–29 years (59.3%), and private-sector employees (41.3%). Most respondents were domiciled in Jakarta (61.3%) and reported occasional visits to the restaurants (52.7%). These findings suggest that the respondents adequately represent active consumers within the premium Japanese restaurant segment.

Prior to hypothesis testing, validity and reliability assessments were conducted to evaluate the quality of the measurement instruments. The validity test results demonstrated that all questionnaire items measuring Brand Image, Food Quality, and Customer Loyalty achieved corrected item-total correlation values greater than the required threshold of 0.159. Consequently, all indicators were considered valid and suitable for further statistical analysis.

Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha also yielded satisfactory results. Brand Image achieved a reliability coefficient of 0.824, Food Quality obtained 0.841, and Customer Loyalty recorded 0.796. Since all values exceeded the minimum acceptable criterion of 0.60, the instruments demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency.

Table 1. Reliability Testing Results

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Conclusion
Brand Image (X1)	0.824	Reliable
Food Quality (X2)	0.841	Reliable
Customer Loyalty (Y)	0.796	Reliable

Source: Output SPSS 26, 2026

The classical assumption tests confirmed that the regression model fulfilled the required statistical assumptions. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test produced a significance value of 0.200, which exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.05, indicating normally distributed residuals. Furthermore, multicollinearity testing revealed Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values of 1.919 for both independent variables, well below the critical value of 10. Scatterplot analysis also showed no systematic pattern among residuals, indicating the absence of heteroscedasticity.

The coefficient of determination analysis revealed that Brand Image independently explained 36.6% of the variation in Customer Loyalty ($R^2 = 0.366$), while Food Quality independently explained 41.2% ($R^2 = 0.412$). When both variables were simultaneously included in the regression model, the explanatory power increased to 51.1% ($R^2 = 0.511$).

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This result indicates that Brand Image and Food Quality collectively explain more than half of customer loyalty behavior.

Table 2. Coefficient of Determination Results

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Brand Image → Customer Loyalty	0.605	0.366	0.360
Food Quality → Customer Loyalty	0.642	0.412	0.406
Brand Image & Food Quality → Customer Loyalty	0.715	0.511	0.504

Source: Output SPSS 26, 2026

The multiple linear regression analysis produced the following equation:
Customer Loyalty = 4.912 + 0.318(Brand Image) + 0.395(Food Quality) + e

The regression coefficients indicate positive relationships between both independent variables and Customer Loyalty. Food Quality exhibited a stronger coefficient than Brand Image, suggesting that customers place greater emphasis on food-related attributes when evaluating their loyalty toward Japanese restaurants.

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis

Relationship	B	β	t-value	p-value
Constant	4.912	-	2.514	0.013
Brand Image → Customer Loyalty	0.318	0.354	4.417	0.000
Food Quality → Customer Loyalty	0.395	0.412	5.064	0.000

Source: Output SPSS 26, 2026

The hypothesis testing results revealed that Brand Image significantly affects Customer Loyalty ($\beta = 0.354$; $t = 4.417$; $p < 0.001$). Similarly, Food Quality significantly affects Customer Loyalty ($\beta = 0.412$; $t = 5.064$; $p < 0.001$). The simultaneous F-test further confirmed that Brand Image and Food Quality collectively influence Customer Loyalty, with an F-value of 76.415 and a significance level below 0.001.

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Table 4. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Result
H1	Brand Image → Customer Loyalty	significant
H2	Food Quality → Customer Loyalty	significant
H3	Brand Image & Food Quality → Customer Loyalty	significant

Source: Output SPSS 26, 2026

To examine differences in customer loyalty between Sushi Tei and Genki Sushi, an Independent Sample t-test was performed. The Levene's Test produced a significance value of 0.644, indicating equal variances between the two groups. The t-test results revealed a statistically significant difference in customer loyalty between the two restaurants (t = 2.634; p = 0.009).

Furthermore, Sushi Tei achieved a higher mean loyalty score (24.32) than Genki Sushi (23.51). The positive mean difference of 0.813 suggests that customers of Sushi Tei demonstrate stronger loyalty than customers of Genki Sushi.

Table 5. Independent Sample t-Test Results

Restaurant	Mean Loyalty Score
Sushi Tei	24.32
Genki Sushi	23.51

Source: Output SPSS 26, 2026

Table 6. Independent Sample t-Test Results

Statistic	Value
t-value	2.634
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.009
Mean Difference	0.813

Source: Output SPSS 26, 2026

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide empirical evidence that Brand Image and Food Quality play significant roles in shaping customer loyalty within the premium Japanese restaurant industry. One of the major findings is that Food Quality emerged as the

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strongest determinant of Customer Loyalty. This result indicates that consumers prioritize the tangible aspects of their dining experiences, including food freshness, taste, texture, presentation, and food safety. Given that sushi restaurants rely heavily on fresh and raw ingredients, consumers tend to evaluate restaurants primarily based on product quality. Therefore, maintaining consistent food quality is essential for sustaining customer retention and encouraging repeat purchase behaviour.

The results also demonstrate that Brand Image significantly influences Customer Loyalty. This finding suggests that customers are more likely to remain loyal to restaurants that possess strong reputations, clear brand identities, and favourable consumer perceptions. In the context of Sushi Tei and Genki Sushi, Brand Image reflects consumers' accumulated experiences and emotional associations with the restaurant. A strong brand image reduces perceived risk and strengthens customer confidence when making dining decisions. These findings support previous studies conducted by Hussein (2023; Octasylva, 2023; Pangestu et al., 2024) which identified Brand Image as a critical antecedent of customer loyalty within the food and beverage sector.

The simultaneous effect of Brand Image and Food Quality further suggests that customer loyalty is formed through the interaction between expectations and experiences. Brand Image shapes consumers' expectations before dining, whereas Food Quality serves as confirmation of those expectations during and after consumption. When both dimensions are effectively managed, customers are more likely to revisit the restaurant and engage in positive word-of-mouth recommendations. The coefficient of determination value (R^2 = 0.511) further indicates that these two variables collectively explain a substantial proportion of customer loyalty behaviour.

An important contribution of this study lies in its comparative analysis between a market leader and a market challenger within the Japanese restaurant industry. The findings reveal that Sushi Tei customers exhibit significantly higher loyalty levels than Genki Sushi customers. This difference may be attributed to Sushi Tei's stronger brand equity, broader menu offerings, longer market presence, and more established reputation among Indonesian consumers. As a market leader, Sushi Tei benefits from first-mover advantages that have enabled the company to build stronger emotional connections with customers over time.

In contrast, Genki Sushi differentiates itself through technological innovation, particularly its tablet-based ordering system and Kousoku Lane food delivery technology. While these innovations successfully enhance customer experience and attract younger consumer segments, the findings suggest that technological differentiation alone may not

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generate loyalty levels comparable to those achieved through long-term brand equity and emotional attachment. Consequently, Genki Sushi should complement its innovation driven strategy with stronger emotional branding initiatives and customer relationship-building programs.

Overall, this study confirms that customer loyalty within the premium Japanese restaurant industry is influenced by both functional value and emotional value. Food Quality serves as the primary functional driver, whereas Brand Image represents the emotional component that reinforces customers' long-term commitment toward a restaurant brand. Furthermore, market position appears to play an important role in shaping loyalty outcomes, highlighting the strategic advantages possessed by established market leaders in highly competitive restaurant markets.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the influence of Brand Image and Food Quality on Customer Loyalty through a comparative analysis between the market leader (Sushi Tei) and the market challenger (Genki Sushi) in the Japanese restaurant industry. The findings reveal that both Brand Image and Food Quality significantly influence customer loyalty. Brand Image contributes positively to customer loyalty by strengthening customers' emotional attachment, trust, and commitment toward the restaurant brand. Meanwhile, Food Quality emerges as the most influential factor, indicating that consumers place substantial importance on product attributes such as taste, freshness, presentation, and food safety when deciding to revisit a restaurant.

The results further demonstrate that Brand Image and Food Quality simultaneously explain 51.1% of the variation in Customer Loyalty, suggesting that both variables work synergistically in shaping consumers' long-term behavioural intentions. Brand Image functions as a mechanism that creates favourable expectations before consumption, whereas Food Quality serves as the tangible evidence that confirms those expectations after the dining experience. Consequently, customer loyalty is more likely to develop when both dimensions are consistently maintained.

An additional contribution of this study lies in its comparative perspective. The findings indicate a significant difference in customer loyalty between Sushi Tei and Genki Sushi. Sushi Tei, as the market leader, records a higher mean loyalty score (24.32) compared with Genki Sushi as the market challenger (23.51). This result suggests that market position may influence customer loyalty formation. Sushi Tei benefits from stronger brand recognition, emotional attachment, and long-established customer trust,

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whereas Genki Sushi relies more heavily on technological differentiation and experiential dining concepts to attract consumers.

Based on these findings, several managerial implications can be proposed. First, restaurant managers should continuously strengthen their brand image through consistent brand identity, service excellence, and emotional branding initiatives. Second, food quality management should remain a strategic priority by ensuring product freshness, food safety, nutritional transparency, and consistency in taste. Third, customer retention programs should be developed to encourage repeat purchases and positive word of mouth recommendations. Finally, Genki Sushi, as a market challenger, should complement its technology-driven dining experience with stronger emotional engagement strategies and value-added offerings to narrow the loyalty gap with Sushi Tei. Meanwhile, Sushi Tei should maintain its competitive advantage by preserving its quality standards and reinforcing its position as the preferred destination for Japanese dining experiences.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on customer loyalty in the food and beverage industry by demonstrating that both brand-related and product-related factors play crucial roles in shaping customer retention. Future research is encouraged to incorporate additional variables, such as customer satisfaction, perceived value, service quality, and customer experience, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of loyalty formation in the restaurant sector.

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