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An Investigation into Knowledge of the Concept of Consumption: A Case of BA Students

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Abstract

Consumption has changed considerably since the second half of the 20th century; in fact, it has become one of the social concepts. As the concept of consumption garners attention, and intensity, psychological, social, economic, cultural, and structural factors have come to significantly affect individual consumption habits. This research aims to investigate the effects of knowledge of consumption patterns on the consumption habits of students in the departments of Kurdish Language and Culture and English Language Education at Dicle University. A quantitative method using a questionnaire was applied to 130 of the 180 students enrolled in these departments. Descriptive, factor, t-test, and regression analyses were performed using SPSS Statistics 22. The findings reveal that the students were on the idea that there is a correlation between their knowledge with regard to gender, family income level, and employment status of consumption behavior. Additionally, environmental factors that determine consumption habits positively affect the consumption behavior of the students and social media. There is a serious lack of studies on this subject; this study will hopefully inspire future work on this topic.

Keywords: consumerism, consumer behavior, knowledge level, consumer habits, university students

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1. INTRODUCTION

The consumer is generally considered to be the person purchasing a produced good. An individual being a consumer throughout their life span is an environmental element that marketing managers cannot control (Solomon, Russell-Bennett, & Previte, 2012; Dal, Oral, & Korkmaz, 2018). Consumers are the first to be affected by environmental changes but their effects cannot be easily understood (Featherstone, 2010). Therefore, marketing managers in developed countries assign great importance to consumer research in order to accurately anticipate these effects (İslamoğlu, 2006). As consumerism is unique to individuals, consumption attempts to include the goods and services that individuals consume to continue their lives (De Mooij, 2019). Consumption of goods and services constitutes the most important feature of being a consumer in order to meet individual social, cultural, and economic needs (Walker, Chang, Powell, & Grantham-McGregor, 2005; Öberseder, Schlegelmilch, & Murphy, 2013). When considered from a different perspective, many factors influence consumption habits, preferences, and decisions, including family, internet use, economic values, social environment, and advertisements (Gajjar, 2013; Cizrelioğulları, Babayiğit, & Altun, 2018).

According to Duesenberry's relative income theory, individual and family consumption habits are linked to the relative income of some members in their family (Palley, 2010). This means that unbalanced family income distribution increases overall consumption while balanced family income distribution reduces consumption (Edwards, 2014). Modern needs are constantly developing, and people show behavioral changes alongside these developments (Özşengür & Güven, 2016). Cultural and social group characteristics, as well as the related ideas and capacity for consumption, greatly influence the likelihood of purchase (Stet & Rosu, 2012). Individuals generally adopt group consumption behaviors in order to be included and maintain their place (Englis & Solomon, 1995; Durmaz & Durmaz, 2014).

Responsible and conscious consumers are crucial to increase living standards and develop society (Bemporad & Baranowski, 2007). As conscious people are aware of their own behaviors, they can criticize themselves for mistakes and alter their actions (Khare, 2014). Consumption can be controlled through a combination of consciousness, awareness, and education, resulting in an actively positive consumer that affects positive changes in society and the economy (Zureik & Mowshowitz, 2005). German sociologist Ulrich Beck, who discusses how to deal with the risks posed by consumption, has put forward the

“conscious modernization theory,” which advocates for the need to be conscious about all aspects of consumption. According to this theory, the basis of knowledge, consciousness, criticism, questioning, and participation in the decision-making process is the beginning of modernization, which affects consumption behavior (Beck, 2005; Fourie, 2012).

Based on the assumption that future youth may unequally benefit or be deprived of resources, this paper aims to create a model by determining consumption behaviors of today’s university-age youth and examining them alongside their level of knowledge about the concept of consumption habits. Understanding this relationship enables us to obtain positive data about their consumption habits. Through this study, this relationship is explored and the main objectives, in which hypotheses are proposed, and existing research is highlighted. In addition, the drivers of consumption among university-age young people are tested. There is not much research on this topic in the literature, which is why this study constitutes a unique and beneficial addition to the literature and to future research.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS

It is clear that young people generally prefer branded products, as they care about their social and environmental status and others’ opinions; as a result, they often choose widely consumed products (Eastman & Eastman, 2011; Goldsmith & Clark, 2012; Eastman & Liu, 2012; Millan & Mittal, 2017). Thus, it is fair to say that consumption behavior affects individual consumption behaviors (de Bruijn, Keer, Conner, & Rhodes, 2012). Since consumption behavior is purposeful, individuals adopting consumption habits buy products and services with them in mind. Purchased products and services serve as potential solutions. Individuals who do not have such consumption purposes cannot show consumption behaviors (Penpece, 2006; Platania, Rapisarda, & Rizzo, 2016). Individual consumption behaviors are affected by many factors, such as family, friends, social circles, social environment, school, and newspaper. (Çakır, Çakır, & Gülşah, 2010). Of these, family is the most important environmental factor driving individual consumption behavior (Moschis, Moore, & Smith, 1984). Therefore, the individual is expected to understand the economy at an early age; childhood experiences guide adulthood preferences (Özşungur & Güven, 2017). In addition, social motivation affects consumption behavior; recent studies indicate that lower-class citizens aim to enter the elite society of consumers in higher social classes. Thus, they consume expensive products in order to gain social approval and status (Hayta, 2008; Vel, Captain, Al-Abbas, & Al Hashemi, 2011; Heinonen, 2011).

Some of the factors that contribute to students' awareness of consumption are spending plans, take advantage of a product's implementation, using limited resources efficiently, and saving money (Makela & Peters, 2004; Ersoy, 2008). Students isolate themselves from societal power to question the purpose of consumption and save themselves from existential concerns. They use consumption as a tool to protect their intellectual and emotional interactions (Ersoy & Nazik, 2006; Uysal, 2017). Individual consumption habits and cultures dictate purchases, which are sometimes considered to be inaccurate needs (Chaplin & Lowrey, 2010). In that case, individuals view consumption as a critical approach and integrate their individual consumption habits into the economic system. (Saygılı, 2011; Buğday & Babaogul, 2016). While examining individual knowledge levels about consumption behavior and how it is influenced by family attitudes, there was a significant degree of variance (Carruth & Skinner, 2001; Aydemir, 2005; Grønhøj, 2006). Families who shop with their children enable them to learn about and gain experience with consumerism, making them a more conscious individual (Grossbart, Carlson, & Walsh, 1991). Teenagers generally do not care much about how families use money. Families often avoid teaching their children how to manage money as they are mostly keen on emotional relationships between parents and children. This escape prevents the necessary attainment of consumption awareness (Ersoy & Sariabdulloğlu, 2010; Velioglu, Çifci, Dölarslan, Kıyan, & Karsu, 2013; Polat & Ünişen, 2016). Some families, on the other hand, expect their children to learn through observation instead of teaching them through proper parental education (Çelik, 2015). Positive family incentives help children become effective and conscious consumers (Gajjar, 2013; Altıntaş, Altun, & Cizrelioğulları, 2020). In contrast, if the family imposes negative penalties, their children may not learn about consumerism or develop healthy consumption behavior (Grønhøj, 2006; Özsungur & Güven, 2017). Families giving children opportunities to act on their own encourages them to become conscious consumers by the time they reach university (Polat & Ünişen, 2016). Evidently, family factors significantly influence knowledge levels and behavioral habits (Özabacı & Özmen, 2005). Additionally, drastic advancements in social media have led to changes in the marketing communications landscape—consumer views have been empowered (Cizrelioğulları, Uwajeh, & Babayiğit, 2019). As a result, environmental factors play a crucial role in the socialization of young people as consumers. They indicate that individuals should look up to role models on how to use products, be conscious of brands, and learn before buying.

2.1. Research Hypothesis and Model

In accordance with the purpose of this research and the research method, a conceptual model was created in Figure 1 and hypotheses were developed:

H1: There is a significant relationship between student knowledge of consumption behaviors and gender.

H2: There is a significant relationship between student knowledge of consumption behaviors and family income level.

H3: There is a significant relationship between student knowledge of consumption behaviors and employment status.

H4: The family factor positively affects student consumption behaviors and knowledge.

H5: The friend factor, which determines student consumption habits, positively affects student consumption behaviors and knowledge.

H6: The location and environment element, which is the external factors that determine student consumption habits, positively affects student consumption behaviors and knowledge.

H7: the social media factor positively affects student consumption behaviors and knowledge.

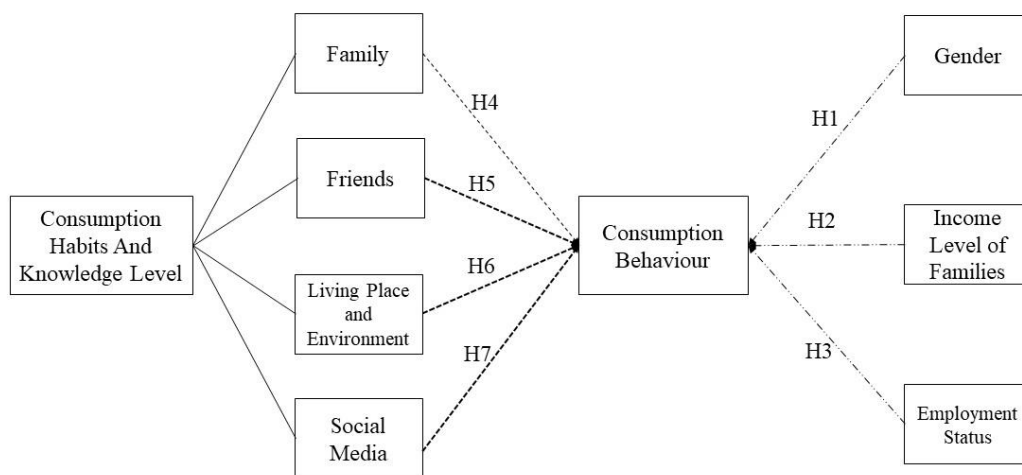


Figure 1. Conceptual model

3. METHODS

The aim of the study is to propose solutions based on the findings about the level of consumption knowledge among Dicle University students in the Kurdish Language and Culture, and English Language Education departments. The sub-problems of this study determine the method of research within the framework of gender differences that may affect level of knowledge, behavioral characteristics, educational status, family income status, and external environmental factors. The population of the study is Dicle University students; the sample consists of 180 students in the Kurdish Language and Culture and English Language Education departments. A total of 30 students enrolled in the Kurdish Language and Culture department and 130 ones out of 160 students studying at the department of English Language Education were selected at Dicle University. The sample was selected using a simple-random-sampling method, as the sampling error was easy to determine. In order to attain results within the scope of the 95% confidence interval and 5% confidence level (Baştürk & Taştepe, 2013), the sample size was determined to be approximately 100, considering the number of students enrolled in previous periods. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed by the researcher and 130 questionnaires were returned for analysis, constituting an 86% response rate. The data collection tool entailed delivering questionnaires to each participant in a random order. Data collection management was applied by asking closed-ended and semi-structured questions. Participation in the study was voluntary, and the identity of the participants was kept confidential. No audio or video recordings were made without permission. The questionnaire scale was created by compiling the data collection methods from previous studies in accordance with the purpose and scope of this study. The survey consists of three parts. The first part evaluated demographic characteristics, including gender, department, class, family income level, and employment status. The second part consisted of 15 questions about how university students define themselves regarding consumer behavior. A five-point Likert-like scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree) was used. The third part of the survey used a three-point Likert-like scale (1 = less; 2 = a little; 3 = very) to ask about external factors (family, social media, friends, place, and environment) related to the level of consumption knowledge. Data analysis consisted of frequency and percentage distributions, explanatory factor analyses, t-tests, and regression analyses conducted through SPSS 22.

4. RESULTS

As seen in Table 1, frequency distributions were determined by asking the participants about the gender of the university student, which department he / she is in, what grade he / she is in, his/her family's income level and whether he / she is employed or not. Of the 130 people who participated in the survey, 86 were male and 44 were female. By department, 98 were from English Language Education and 32 were from Kurdish Language and Culture. By grade, 47 were in the third grade, 32 were in the second grade, 26 were in the fourth grade, and 25 were in the first grade. By family income level, 60 were at the medium level, 43 were at the low level, and 27 were at the high level. Finally, by employment, 56 were employed at the time while 74 were not.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants

Questions	Demographic Variables	Analysis	
		Frequency	Percentage %
What is your gender?	Male	86	63.2
	Female	44	33.8
What is your department?	Kurdish Language and Culture	32	24.6
	English Language Education	98	75.4
Which class are you in?	First year	25	19.2
	Second year	32	24.6
	Third year	47	36.2
	Forth year	26	20.0
What is your family income level?	Low	43	33.1
	Middle	60	46.1
	High	27	20.8
Do you work at a job?	I am working	56	43.1
	I am not working	74	56.9
Total		130	100

Table 2 looks at the association between family income level and employment. We found that 31 of the 43 students from low-income families were employed while 12 were not; 15 of the 60 students from a middle-income family were employed while 45 were not; 7 of the 27 students from a high-income family were employed while 20 were. These rates highlight the fact that students from each income level worked a job while studying.

Table 2: Student employment status by family income level

		Employment	
		Working	Not Working
	Low	31	12
Family Income Level	Middle	18	45
	High	7	20
Total		56	74

Table 3 looks at the association between department and employment. We found that 23 of the 32 students enrolled in the Kurdish Language and Culture department were employed while 9 were not; in contrast, On the other hand, 33 of the 98 students enrolled in the English Language Education department were employed while 65 were not.

Table 3: Student employment status by department

		Do You Work at a Job?	
		Working	Not Working
Department	Kurdish Language and Culture	23	9
	English Language Education	33	65
Total		56	74

Before testing the hypotheses, skewness and kurtosis values were examined to ensure that the data was correctly distributed. The mean and standard deviation values of the consumption behavior scale were also determined. When the skewness and kurtosis ratios are between -1 and 1, the data shows a normal distribution (Bai & Ng, 2005; Çelik & Şenoğlu, 2012); Kim

(2013) is slightly more lenient, with a normal range between -1.5 and 1.5. As shown in Table 4, it was appropriate to carry out parametric tests to test hypotheses due to the distortion and kurtosis values of some of the participants. When viewed from another perspective, and regarding the answers of the following questions “When I want to buy clothes, I pay attention to the price”; “I pay attention to whether I really need something I want to buy”; and “I don’t think there should be limits on spending for my social life,” it is clear that unstable aspects prevail. In contrast, it is clear that students answering questions about other consumer behaviors tend to participate in questions of average values. The highest average is $X = 4.08/SS = 0.801$ with “I don’t think there should be limits on spending for my health” while the lowest average is $X = 3.16/SS = 1.25$ with “I don’t think there should be limits on spending for my social life.” Based on the average values, while students believe that expenditure is warranted for consumption on education, health, and nutrition, some students are not conscious consumers regarding whether they need to buy a product and prices paid for clothes.

Table 4. Descriptive analysis of variables that determine student consumption behavior

Variables	X	SS	Skewness	Kurtosis
Q1. The most important reason for making money is to be able to survive.	4.06	1.02	-.980	.215
Q2. I pay attention to whether I really need something I want to buy.	3.36	1.28	-.085	-1.000
Q3. First, I find out the price of the things I will buy.	3.99	1.02	-.968	.597
Q4. When I want to buy clothes, I pay attention to the price.	3.87	1.10	-.675	-.395
Q5. I don’t think my spending is commensurate with my income.	3.21	1.20	-.072	-.732
Q6. I don’t think there should be limits on spending for my nutrition.	4.04	1.05	-.885	-.134
Q7. I don’t think there should be limits on spending for my health.	4.08	.801	-.070	1,250
Q8. I don’t think there should be limits on spending for my social life.	3.16	1.25	-.225	-1.017
Q9. I don’t think I will ever save money for education.	3.99.	1.02	-.965	594
Q10. I consider investing in advance to realize my future dreams.	3.67	1.40	-.725	-.778
Q11. In my opinion, the consumer should be conscientious.	4.04	1.02	-.842	-.111
Q12. I think consumers should be careful with their resources.	3.87	1.05	-.605	-.166

Q13. I think we will face resource shortage problems in the future.	3.80	1.22	-.745	-.742
Q14. I believe everything I buy is something I need.	3.65	1.32	-.866	-.404
Q15. I think I can manage my money.	3.75	1.15	-.716	-.333

Exploratory factor analysis was applied in this study using the Varimax rotation in the statistical analysis of the consumption behavior scale. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) adequacy measurement was used to gauge the applicability of the exploratory factor analysis and Bartlett’s sphericity test to tests of the main mass integrity (Williams, Onsmann, & Brown, 2010). According to the analysis results in Table 5, Bartlett’s test value was found to be 1649, 23, valid at the level of 0.00 significance. In other words, there is a relationship between the variables in the main mass. A KMO ratio of over 60 percent is desirable; as shown in Table 2, the result of the KMO test was 88.4 percent, indicating a strong relationship. A factor consisting of 15 items with an eigenvalue greater than 1 was obtained. Propositions with factor loadings over 0.500 were considered. Based on these results from the exploratory factor analysis, we found that the expressions were collected under one factor and the cumulative variance rate was 35.335 percent with an eigenvalue of 5.184 and a Cronbach-Alpha value (from the reliability test) of 0.896.

Table 5. Factor analysis of student consumption behavior

Variables	Factor Loading
Q1. The most important reason for making money is to be able to survive.	.750
Q2. I pay attention to whether I really need something I want to buy.	.772
Q3. First, I find out the price of the things I will buy.	.728
Q4. When I want to buy clothes, I pay attention to the price.	.682
Q5. I don’t think my spending is commensurate with my income.	.676
Q6. I don’t think there should be limits on spending for my nutrition.	.695
Q7. I don’t think there should be limits on spending for my health.	.615
Q8. I don’t think there should be limits on spending for my social life.	.587
Q9. I don’t think I will ever save money for education.	.798

Q10. I consider investing in advance to realize my future dreams.		.596
Q11. In my opinion, the consumer should be conscientious.		.805
Q12. I think consumers should be careful with their resources.		.645
Q13. I think we will face resource shortage problems in the future.		.578
Q14. I believe everything I buy is something I need.		.668
Q15. I think I can manage my money.		.745
	Variance (%)	35.335
EFA	Eigenvalue	5.184
	Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) test	0.884
	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	1649.23
Reliability Analysis	Cronbach's Alpha	0.896

Independent t-test analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the consumer behavior and gender of the participants. Multiple regression analysis was applied to support this analysis and determine the hypothesis results. The results shown in Table 6 indicate a significant difference at the level of $t = 0.05: 150 = 2.750, p < 0.05$ in the relationship between gender and student consumption habits.

Table 6. T-test analysis of the relationship between gender and consumption behavior.

		N	Levene's Test		T-Test		
Student consumption behavior			F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
	Male	86	2.809	.010	2.750*	150	.045
	Female	44					

Note: *Significance level $p < 0.05$

Regression analysis was conducted to test the degree of significance between the external determinants of consumption behavior and knowledge level and the degree of significance between family income level and employment status. As shown in Table 7, the consumption behavior of students is a result of multiple regression analysis between family income level

and employment status, $t = 6.457, p < 0$. There is a significant relationship at the 05 level. In addition, there is a significant relationship between consumption behavior and family income level at $t = 5.524, p < 0.05$.

Table 7. Regression analysis

		Variable		Sig.	
		B	Std. Error		t
Dependent Variable: Student Consumption Behavior					
Family Income Level		,360	,050	5,524*	,005
Employment Status		,829	,115	6,457*	,000
R ²	0.325				
SE	0.585				
F	54.163				

Note: *Significance level $p < 0.05$

The factors thought to influence consumption habits and knowledge level of participants are family, friends, social media, and place/environment. As shown in Table 8, the t-test reveals a significant and positive relationship between some of the external factors and both consumption habits and consumption knowledge. The t value in the table is 2.338 and the p-value is less than 0.05, meaning there is a significant and positive relationship between family and consumption behavior. In addition, there is a positive and significant relationship between social media and consumption behavior, as revealed by a t value of 3.018 and p-value of 0.00. However, this significant relationship does not appear to exist for friends or place/environment, as the p-value is higher than 0.05.

Table 8. Regression analysis

		Variables		t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error		
Dependent Variable: Student Consumption Behaviours					
Family		,285	,078	2,338**	,025
Living Place and Environment		,107	,047	1,910	,076
Friends		,024	,065	-164	,546
Social Media		,317	,118	3,018*	,000
R ²	0.216				
SE	0.449				
F	3.821				

Note: *Significance level $p < 0.001$; **Significance level $p < 0.05$

As a result of the above multiple regression and t-test analyses, Table 9 shows the significance levels of H1, H2, H3, H4, and H7; they were accepted because their p-values were below $p < 0.05$. It is clear that family and social media play significant roles in determining student consumption behavior. Gender, family income level, and employment

status are also shown to influence on student consumption behavior. H5 and H6, in contrast, are rejected; their p-values exceed $p < 0.05$, meaning significance cannot be verified.

Table 9. Hypothesis test

Hypothesis	P-Value	Status
H1: There is a significant relationship between student knowledge of consumption behaviors and gender.	P=0.045 ($p < 0.05$)	Accepted
H2: There is a significant relationship between student knowledge of consumption behaviors and family income level.	P=0.005 ($P < 0.05$)	Accepted
H3: There is a significant relationship between student knowledge of consumption behaviors and employment status.	P=0.000 ($P < 0.05$)	Accepted
H4: The family factor positively affects student consumption behaviors and knowledge.	P=0.025 ($p < 0.05$)	Accepted
H5: The friend factor positively affects student consumption behaviors and knowledge.	P=0.076 $P > 0.05$	Rejected
H6: The location and environment element positively affects student consumption behaviors and knowledge.	P=0.546 ($p > 0.05$)	Rejected
H7: the social media factor positively affects student consumption behaviors and knowledge.	P=0.000 ($P < 0.05$)	Accepted

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted mostly by associating consumption habits and knowledge of some of the students enrolled in the departments of Kurdish Language and Culture and English Language Education at the University of Dicle with various external drivers. In this context, a survey was carried out among 130 of the 180 university students enrolled in these two departments. Among these students, gender and family income were shown to play an important role in obtaining information about consumption behavior. Both family and social media platforms were shown to significantly and positively affect consumption behavior. However, we found that neither friends nor living environment had a significant impact on consumption behavior. These results suggest that modern technological development, the increasing population, and the unstable and exaggerated consumption resources are cause for

concern. The conceptual model and hypotheses created by this research suggest that diminishing resources may be unequally in the future.

The change process is already happening very quickly. The main problem is that consumers do not have sufficient resources or know how to use the resources they do have. As consumers, students should be able to meet their own needs to improve their quality of life by using their resources consciously. In this way, students gain knowledge about and skills in consumption as they purchase goods and services. However, the knowledge and skills gained are constantly changing due to environmental factors. The education that students receive from external factors (e.g. social media, friends, place environment) can be important factors in protecting students' values and integrating them more easily. This study aimed to draw attention to the effect of childhood preferences and basing behaviors on adulthood preferences and behavioral characteristics. An early understanding of the economy allows for childhood experiences to shape adulthood preferences. Experiences and talents developed during childhood serve an important function in shaping consumption habits later in life.

Amid the modern excess of consumption, the effects of group purchasing behaviors are obvious; hence, important environmental factors are crucial in the acquisition of consumption habits. In order to comprehend the importance of education as a consumer, it is necessary for children to learn at an early age. For the benefit of society and the economy, consumers should be conscious; thus, comprehensive information distribution and awareness-raising activities that appeal to a wide audience are crucial. If the general mindset changes, there will be positive changes in overall purchasing behaviors. Educational institutions should work to raise consumer consciousness. In order to balance the level of consumption, we must question our own consumption behaviors and make rational, conscious decisions while shopping. In this way, by preserving the social and ecological environment, we will be able to leave a healthy world for the next generation.

Hopefully, this paper will spur future research on consumer behavior. In addition to its evaluation of existing theories, this paper can also be advantageous in terms of collecting information about young people in the education sector and what influences their consumption behaviors. Future studies on this subject should apply this methodology to larger samples; in this sense, this study will serve as a springboard for future studies.

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