

Entertainment Tourism Model: International Mega-Events as a Driver of Tourism

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Abstract: Tourism is an integral driver of economic productivity. Using international arrivals as a link to national income, this study examines whether mega-events defined as large-scale cultural, music, sports, and trade shows can serve as predictors of foreign tourist arrivals. While previous literature has emphasized the importance of events in shaping destination image and competitiveness, few studies have examined their predictive value across multiple countries and years. This research addresses that gap by compiling a new dataset from 82 countries. Event counts were collected for the years 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2023, while UNWTO validated 2024 international arrivals were used as the dependent variable. The pandemic years were deliberately excluded to avoid distortions and irregularities in both tourism flows and event programming. The study applied a quantitative, ex-post-facto research design, relying on secondary data drawn from international databases and validated institutional reports. The sample size of 82 was consistent with accepted regression requirements under Green's formula, ensuring reliability of results. Multiple regression analysis was conducted in SPSS to test the predictive strength of each event category. Results show that the model explains 28.1% of the variance in international arrivals (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.243$). Among the predictors, only music events produced a statistically significant effect, indicating that each additional large music concert or festival is associated with roughly 1.7 million more arrivals. Sports events showed a positive but non-significant effect, while cultural festivals and trade shows contributed little within the model. Moreover, the findings underscore the significance of event-led tourism strategies and the necessity for governments to view events as measurable policy instruments, rather than isolated cultural activities. By presenting a mathematical model grounded in cross-country data, this study provides policymakers with an evidence-based framework to guide investment, prioritize event categories with the strongest outcomes, and support long-term tourism planning and national development goals.

Keywords: Entertainment Tourism Model, Ex-Post-Facto Research Design, Mega-events, Tourism Driver

1. Introduction

Tourism forms a big part of the service sector in a country's economy. Enhancing its main indicators can bring about a significant increase to a nation's produce. Significant indicator defined foreign tourist arrivals as a factor of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In a data from World Bank in 2022, using the recorded international tourists' arrivals and receipts, it can be estimated that 1 foreign tourist spends an average of 775 dollars per the country of destination. That's dividing the total recorded international tourist spending by the total number of tourist arrivals. Aligning to this, the increase of foreign tourist arrivals can trigger economic productivity. This research analyzed specific mega-events that are hypothesized to be a significant factor in putting a country as an exciting destination in the international community, thus, marketing its tourism probability, and eventually increase foreign tourist arrivals.

Several nations already adopted this approach. In recent years, governments identified the importance of entertainment mega-events as drivers of tourism. It acted as a marketing initiative. Through this, they have capitalized on the virality, popularity and contagious effect in awareness.

In Singapore, its leaders pursued entertainment-led tourism by securing recurring Formula 1 night races and high-profile concerts such as Taylor Swift's 2024 exclusive regional shows. The Singapore Tourism Board credits such events with record-breaking receipts and international spillovers, while the academic literature supports the role of mega-sport and music events as drivers of inbound travel (Singapore Tourism Board, 2024; Fourie & Santana-Gallego, 2022).

Meanwhile, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, its government envisions that in 2030, sports and entertainment events shall be a tool of diversification. The General Entertainment Authority reported 72 million event attendees in 2023, while total visits surpassed 100 million in 2023 and reached 116 million in 2024. These events include boxing matches, Formula E races, and concerts, underscoring the country's rapid ascent in global entertainment tourism (Saudi Tourism Authority, 2023; General Entertainment Authority, 2023; Ministry of Tourism, 2025).

Historically, in the Philippines, it leveraged global mega-events to place itself on the international tourism map. The Miss Universe Pageant in 1974 and the Thrilla in Manila boxing match in 1975 generated substantial international media exposure and resulted with increased tourist arrivals. Recent historiography highlights the lack of quantified causal studies for the 1970s, but Department of Tourism historical data show noticeable spikes. These events are widely discussed as landmark cases in the Philippines’ tourism narrative (Dacanay, 2012; Department of Tourism, 2023). However, not all international spectacles produced tourism dividends. The Beatles’ concert in Manila in 1966, though culturally iconic, was marred by political controversy and organizational missteps. As a result, international arrivals in the late 1960s showed no measurable tourism impact attributable to the event (Dacanay, 2012).

By contrast, the Miss Universe pageant in 1974 and the “Thrilla in Manila” heavyweight championship between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier in 1975 marked a decisive turning point. Both events were broadcast globally and cast Manila as a capable host of world-class events. Tourism data confirm that arrivals climbed from 779,000 in 1973 to 955,000 in 1974, coinciding with Miss Universe, and then surged to 1.26 million by 1975, the year of the Thrilla in Manila (Sayson, 2016). These figures demonstrate how certain mega-events, particularly those with global resonance, generated sustained visibility and growth for the Philippines.

2. Tourism Mega-Events in the Philippines from 1960s 1980

The Beatles in Manila, 1966. The Beatles arrived in Manila in July 1966 for two concerts at Rizal Memorial Stadium. The event became infamous after the band inadvertently snubbed First Lady Imelda Marcos, leading to chaos and public outrage. Cultural historians note this diplomatic blunder did not contribute to tourism growth (see academic analyses and DOT retrospectives).

Miss Universe, 1974 – Manila’s Beauty and Diplomacy Pageant. In July 1974, the Philippines hosted the Miss Universe pageant at the newly constructed Folk Arts Theater. This globally televised event positioned Manila as a glamorous Asian hub, producing a modest bump in tourist arrivals (Dacanay, 2012; UNWTO data).

The Thrilla in Manila, 1975. The third fight between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier, held in October 1975 at the Araneta Coliseum, was marketed as proof that the Philippines could host world-class sporting spectacles. Hotels filled, infrastructure was showcased, and short-term tourism rose (Dacanay, 2012). However, the effect was temporary.

1975–1980 Tourism Aftermath. After Miss Universe and the Thrilla, the Marcos administration sought to leverage momentum by staging the IMF-World Bank meetings (1976), ASEAN summits, and state-led cultural festivals. Tourism arrivals increased through the late 1970s (DOT; UNWTO), but structural economic and political issues eroded long-term gains.

To further illustrate the narratives on the Philippine tourism historical outlook, data from the Philippine, Department of Tourism (DOT), National Statistics Coordination Board, and World Bank (2013) is presented to show that arrivals rose sharply after the Miss Universe pageant in 1974 and the *Thrilla in Manila* in 1975. Thus, for the first time, putting Manila into the international map. (see graph figure 1.)

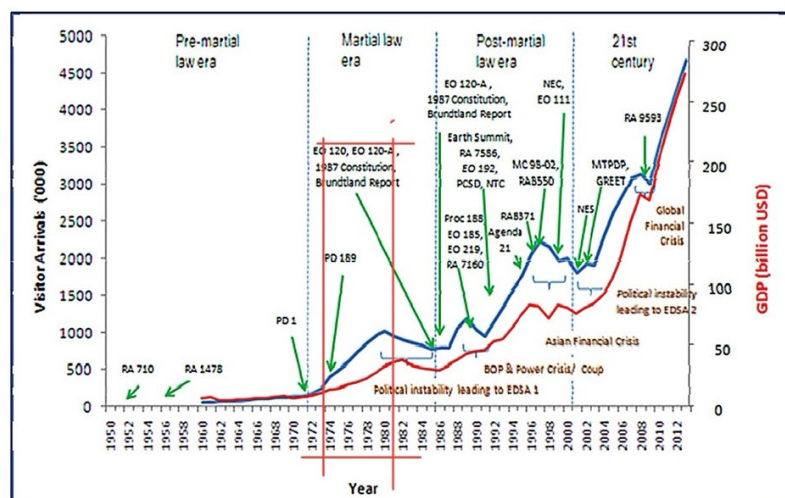


Figure 1: Foreign Visitor Arrival in the Philippines, the Initiatives and Events that Affected the Tourism Industry and the Gross National Product, 1960-2013.

(Source: Actual figure. DOT, National Statistics Coordination Board, World Bank, as cited by Dela Santa 2015)

Relative to figure 1, it appears to support the theoretical framework that by producing mega-events, there is a probability that a nation can increase tourism indicators such as international arrivals. This is evident in the figure showing a positive spike after the 2 mega-events in the early 1970s in the Philippines. Relative to figure 1, mega-events theoretically increase tourism indicators. Aligning to this, the study aims to answer, what specific mega-events are predictors of increase in international tourist arrivals in the Philippines?

This study proposes that the frequency of mega-events hosted in the Philippines during 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2023 exert a positive influence on 2024 international tourist arrivals. Specifically, it is hypothesized that (1) concerts and music festivals, (2) cultural and tradition festivals, (3) sports events, and (4) exhibitions and trade shows serve as significant predictors of increased inbound tourism. Guided by the event-led tourism literature, the hypothesis assumes that these event categories enhance destination visibility, stimulate traveler interest, and generate post-event momentum that contributes to measurable gains in international visitor volume in the year following the observed event cycle.

Relatively, this is theoretically expressed with the following proposed mathematical model:

The “Entertainment Tourism Model” (ETM);

$$Arrivals (2024) = \beta_0 + \beta_1(Music) + \beta_2(Culture) + \beta_3(Sports) + \beta_4(Tradeshows) + \epsilon$$

where:

Arrivals (2024) = International tourist arrivals in 2024 (in millions)

β_0 = Intercept representing the baseline level of arrivals when all event counts are zero

Culture = Number of cultural and traditional festivals (2017–2023)

Music = Number of concerts and music festivals (2017–2023)

Sports = Number of sports events (2017–2023)

Tradeshows = Number of exhibitions and trade shows (2017–2023)

ϵ = Error term accounting for unexplained variation in arrivals

The coefficients β_1 to β_4 represent the expected change in 2024 international tourist arrivals associated with a one-unit increase in each respective event category.

In view of the proposed math model, the concept is best illustrated in the research paradigm. (see figure 2.)

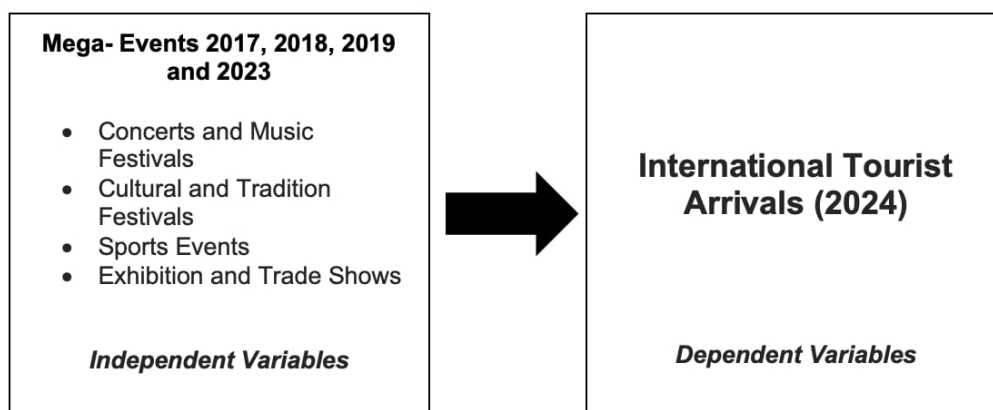


Figure 2: Research Paradigm

Figure 2 describes how the conceptual framework, mega-events such as, *concerts and music festivals, cultural and tradition festivals, sports, and exhibition and trade shows* from 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2023, affect 2024 international tourist arrivals. Events serve as independent variables, while arrivals serve as the dependent variable.

Moreover, this study investigates how mega-events predict international tourist arrivals across 82 countries. It shall also support Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by linking event-driven tourism to inclusive and sustainable economic performance.

3. Literature Review

Entertainment events are widely recognized in the event-tourism literature as catalysts for destination visibility, short-term visitor influx, and potential long-term tourism growth when supported by strategic legacy planning. Reviews of event tourism emphasize that events operate through multiple channels such as direct visitor spending, global media exposure, and destination image enhancement, which can together increase international arrivals if the host leverages post-event marketing and infrastructure improvements (Getz, 2008). Empirical cross-country analyses find that the tourism uplift from entertainment events varies by event type, host capacity, seasonality, and the geographic origin of visitors, with some high-profile sports events producing measurable increases in inbound tourism in the event year and occasionally in subsequent years (Fourie & Santana-Gallego, 2011; Kasimati, 2003). Critical literature also cautions that positive tourism impacts are not automatic. Benefits depend on pre-event planning, integration with broader tourism strategies, and the management of displacement effects and short-lived hype (Roche, 2000; Grix, 2014).

Relative to the hypothesis on mega-events, a growing body of literatures differentiated effects by category. Music and cultural festivals often stimulate niche and repeat visitation through authentic cultural offerings and word-of-mouth, while large sporting events and international expos generate broader media attention and can attract first-time international visitors, provided the host converts exposure into tourism products and repeat itineraries (Getz, 2008; Fourie & Santana-Gallego, 2011). Country and city-level case studies within Southeast Asia, including research on major Philippine festivals such as Sinulog and Ati-Atihan, report clear local tourism and economic benefits such as, increased hotel occupancy, food and transport revenues. These studies also highlight methodological limits namely, single-case designs, short time windows and the need for comparative, multi-year analyses to assess sustained effects on national arrivals (Calopez, 2011; Ortiz, [thesis]; Philippines Tourism Promotions Board). These findings indicates that the independent variables merit empirical testing as distinct predictors of 2024 international arrivals for the Philippines, using multi-year secondary data to distinguish immediate spikes from longer-term tourism growth.

For this study, a mega-event is defined as any planned, time-bound gathering with a fixed venue and published dates, open to the public via ticketing or formal registration, with large-scale attendance that distinguishes it from ordinary local events. This operational threshold is adapted from event-scale taxonomies in contemporary event studies (Getz & Page, 2020), and from recent scholarship on the exceptional social, infrastructural and destination effects associated with mega-events (Duignan et al., 2023; Weaver, Moyle, & McLennan, 2021). We count editions at the city level and treat multi-day runs as one event; purely virtual editions are excluded. To harvest pure mega-events, this study further qualified events catering to at least 5000 attendees or more. The following definition of specific mega-events is prescribed in this study:

3.1 Concerts and Music Festivals

City-level editions of ticketed live music events and festivals are counted when they are staged in large venues or settings that typically attract crowds beyond local community scale. This includes multi-stage music festivals, large stadium or arena concerts, and city-center open-air shows (Skandalis, Banister, & Byrom, 2024). Club nights, bar gigs, and private showcases are excluded. Music-event mega-gatherings function as temporary cultural districts that shape destination image and visitor flows (Wood, Kinnunen, Moss, & Li, 2024), and recent research highlights their role in place-making and tourism demand (Richards & Leal Londoño, 2022). Glastonbury Music festivals, Coldplay/Taylor Swift concert tours and the likes are included in the compilation.

3.2 Cultural and Traditional Festivals

Public, recurring cultural festivals (e.g., religious, seasonal, heritage, diaspora or community festivals) are included when they are widely accessible and gather audiences beyond local neighborhoods (Rossetti & Quinn, 2021). Eligible festivals feature distinctive cultural content such as rituals, performances, arts, or foodways, and are open to general audiences with published dates and locations. Festival tourism research demonstrates measurable cultural, social, and well-being outcomes at this scale (Gedecho, Kim, & Wondirad, 2024), while authenticity-focused studies further support their operationalization as mega-events (Zhang et al., 2022). Examples of this are the Oktoberfest in Germany, Snow Festivals, and other flagship festivals around the world.

3.3 Sports Events

Spectator-oriented sports competitions, tournaments, and mass-participation events are included when hosted in public venues with notable audience or participant scale (Bazzanella, Belotti, & Franch, 2023). This covers international fixtures, national league games held in large stadia, mass road races, and multi-sport meets. The inclusion captures events of sufficient impact on destination demand and local economies (Raso & Cherubini, 2023), and aligns with comprehensive syntheses on sport-event tourism (Gibson & Fairley, 2021). Saudi's Riyadh Season, Olympics, F1 races and others are included in this category.

3.4 Exhibitions and Tradeshows

Business events such as exhibitions, trade fairs, trade shows, or large conventions are counted when they publish dates, venues, and attract significant public or professional audiences (ISO, 2025). These definitions follow current international standards and industry reporting practices, with global industry tracking (UFI, 2024) and meetings statistics (ICCA, 2025) substantiating the scale and characteristics of such events. Virtual-only fairs are excluded, while hybrid events are included if on-site participation is substantial. Comic-Con International, Airshows, Mobile World Congress and others are examples included in compilation.

3.5 2024 International Tourist Arrivals

International tourist arrivals are defined as the count of non-resident overnight visitors entering a country, consistent with UN Tourism (UNWTO) standards (UN Tourism, 2025). This indicator is compiled from border, accommodation, or survey sources; the study uses annual totals as the dependent variable. Current definitional notes and dashboards (UN Tourism, 2024; World Bank, 2024) reflect post-pandemic methodological updates. Included in this study is the verified 2024 UNWTO foreign tourist arrivals expressed in absolute numbers.

4. Materials and Methods

The study employed a quantitative, *ex post facto* research design, utilizing secondary data analysis. The researchers relied on published statistical records of international tourist arrivals and published counts of mega-events. The event data covered the years 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2023, while the 2024 tourist arrivals were used as the dependent variable. The pandemic years 2020–2022 were excluded to avoid distortions and ensure the dataset reflected both stable pre-pandemic patterns and the first year of recovery. By anchoring the analysis on the most recent full year of validated arrivals (2024), the study aligns past event activity with a reliable outcome measure, enabling robust comparisons across countries under comparable conditions.

The sample size of $N = 82$ countries was derived in accordance with accepted rules of thumb for multiple regression. Following Green's (1991) guideline of $N = 50 + 8m$, where m is the number of independent variables, the minimum sample required for a model with four predictors is $50 + 8(4) = 82$. This formula ensured that the dataset met the conventional threshold for statistical power and model stability. Accordingly, the study retained 82 validated country cases, each with complete data on the four independent variables namely, Concerts and Music Festivals, Cultural and Traditional Festivals, Sports events, and Exhibitions and Tradeshows, and the dependent variable, 2024 international tourist arrivals.

The researchers conducted a manual compilation process via web searches for mega-events and documented sources in APA style. Researchers then plotted the event counts and arrivals into the dataset. Utmost review and validation was done to ensure proper qualification of mega-events are rated accurately as defined. The absence of any published proof of promotion and attendance resulted to the exclusion of a specific mega-event. The cleaned dataset was then computed with regression analysis using SPSS software.

5. Results and Discussion

The analysis utilized a complete and validated dataset of 82 countries, each containing aggregated manual counts of Concerts and Music Festivals, Cultural and Traditional Festivals, Sports Events, and Exhibitions and Trade Shows held in 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2023. These event totals were paired with the verified 2024 international tourist arrivals reported by UN Tourism, resulting in a five-variable dataset. All event entries were manually validated

and counted to ensure full alignment with the study’s operational definition of mega-events. Before statistical processing, the researchers organized and plotted the variables in Excel to review the dataset visually and confirm completeness, after which the finalized file was imported into SPSS for analysis.

After subjecting the secondary data into inferential statistics, using multiple regression analysis, the following table output was derived:

Table 1: Mega-events Regression Table

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(constant)	-8.876	4.210		-2.109	0.038
Culture	0.175	0.652	0.034	0.269	0.789
Music	1.715	0.710	0.327	2.416	0.018
Sports	1.307	.890	0.198	1.469	0.146
Tradeshows	.386	1.189	0.052	0.325	0.746

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
0.530	0.281	0.243	13.252

The table shows the regression of the DV 2024 tourist arrivals (in millions) in respect to the IV, four categories of mega-event counts (SPSS coding: Music, Culture, Sports, Tradeshows) aggregated across 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2023. SPSS computation estimated unstandardized B values through ordinary least squares, reflecting the expected change in arrivals for each additional event, controlling for the other categories. This process generated the empirical model: Arrivals = -8.876 + 0.175(Culture) + 1.715(Music) + 1.307(Sports) + 0.386(Tradeshows), along with the model’s significance levels and Adjusted R square of 0.243.

Ultimately, it appears that *Concerts and Music Festivals* show a positive and statistically significant effect (B = 1.715, p = 0.018, standardized β = 0.327).

This means that, holding other categories constant, each additional large Concerts and Music Festivals across the four-year period is associated with 1.7 million more tourist arrivals in the succeeding year. This aligns with the theory that global concerts, music festivals, and probably film festivals generate substantial international travel. Culture/Traditions, Sports, and Tradeshows are all positively signed, but none reach statistical significance at .005. The estimated coefficients suggest directional importance, but we cannot claim robust effects given this dataset.

The model explains 28.1% of the variance in arrivals (Adj. R² = 0.243). This indicates moderate explanatory power. This means that mega-event volumes per country are relevant, but other control factors such as visa, infrastructure, prices, safety and others may account for the majority of the variance.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

Tourism is now a deliberate policy tool, with nations like Singapore and Saudi Arabia showing how strategic event programming can drive global visibility and economic gains. Singapore invests in high-profile concerts and Formula 1 races, while Saudi Arabia’s entertainment authority has used sports and festivals to diversify its economy. These cases demonstrate that government decisions can transform events into measurable drivers of tourism growth. This study reinforces the lesson that tourism policy must be evidence-based.

In view of the results of this study, the recommended mathematical model is supported by the empirical results. This may offer governments a clear tool to identify which event categories most strongly influence arrivals. This could help set priorities and guide resource allocation. Embedding this model into tourism planning allows nations to design event portfolios that are both data-driven and aligned with long-term developmental goals. Using the proposed Mathematical Model, “Entertainment Tourism Model” (ETM), and the estimated parameters derived from the dataset, the regression model is expressed as:

$$Arrivals = -8.876 + 0.175(Culture) + 1.715(Music) + 1.307(Sports) + 0.386 (Tradeshows)$$

where:

Arrivals = International tourist arrivals (in millions)

Culture = Number of cultural and traditional festivals

Music = Number of concerts and music festivals

Sports = Number of sports events

Tradeshows = Number of exhibitions and trade shows

Based on the regression computation, the model explains 28.1% of the variance in tourist arrivals (Adj. $R^2 = 0.243$). Among the predictors, Concerts and Music events exert the strongest and statistically significant effect.

Specifically, the coefficient of 1.715 indicates that, for each additional Concerts and Music mega event held during a 4 year period, a country may be expected to attract approximately 1.7 million more international tourists in the succeeding years, holding all other event categories constant.

Overall, the mathematical model provides a formal expression of how validated mega-event categories shape international tourist arrivals, and it highlights the importance of Concerts and Music events in driving cross-national tourism performance.

In line with the results, the model explains only about a quarter of the variance, apparently indicating that many other factors were not included in this research. Key elements such as infrastructure, safety, transport access, pricing, visa policy, and destination image were outside the study's scope. These other factors are seen as critical in tourism growth. Future work should broaden the model by combining event data with these structural indicators. These shall allow policymakers to weigh events against other core drivers of arrivals. Domestic level approach and regional comparisons could also refine the model's applicability.

The proposed mathematical model is recommended as a starting point highlighting the predictive role of events in tourism. Entirely, it is best used when integrated into a wider, multi-factor approach in tourism planning. Ultimately, this study compiles a unique dataset of validated concerts and music festivals, cultural festivals, sports events, and tradeshows from 82 countries in 4 years, linked with the succeeding year's tourist arrivals.

It is observed that no previous work has combined these event categories across the said scope, making the dataset original and allowed measurability testing of how events influence tourism.

Ethics Declaration

This study adheres to established ethical standards for academic research. It does not involve human participants, interviews, surveys, or any form of personal data collection. All information utilized in the analysis consists solely of publicly available secondary data. These were obtained from verified institutional sources, including tourism databases, event archives, and statistical agencies. No confidential or proprietary information was accessed or disclosed. The research complies with data integrity, transparency, and citation requirements.

AI Declaration

During the compilation of country-level mega-event data, the researchers used Google's built-in AI search assistance, specifically the automatic AI-generated summaries and prompts that appear alongside standard Google Search results. Its function was limited to improving search efficiency by suggesting related queries and highlighting possible event pages. All event entries were manually opened, verified, and classified by the researchers according to the criteria. There was no AI system generated texts, data, or analysis used in this manuscript. All dataset entries and interpretations are solely from the researchers.

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