



Developing a transformational leadership measurement model for hotel employees: A confirmatory factor analysis

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Abstract

In the hotel industry, the pursuit of elevated service quality stands as a pivotal concern for hoteliers, serving as a strategic imperative in establishing a competitive advantage amidst a landscape where services offered tend to parallel one another. Managers in the hospitality sector may now use transformational leadership as a productive management tool to inspire employee to perform above and beyond expectations. The objective of this study is to enhance and validate a measurement scale for transformational leadership derived from contemporary human resource management literature, specifically tailored for front office employees within the hotel industry in Thailand. This validation process is conducted using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Data were gathered from a sample of 350 employees working at 5-star hotels affiliated with the Thai Hotels Association (THA) in Bangkok. The findings demonstrate robust multidimensionality across the five identified indicators, comprising a total of 20 items assessing transformational leadership among hotel front office employees, based on empirical analysis. Moreover, the overall modified measurement model of transformational leadership has demonstrated a good fit empirically. Finally, the results of this study, which are defined as the improved and verified measurement of transformational leadership in this investigation, can be used as an assessment instrument by hotels looking to pinpoint problems and overhaul human resource policies and practices for their front office employees.

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unforeseen, temporary, and significant downturn in revenue for numerous industries globally. In recent years, businesses have faced unaddressed changes resulting from global competition, rapid technological advancements, and the emergence of new markets, necessitating swift and targeted responses for survival (Caligiuri et al., 2020). These adaptations involve significant transformations not only in individual values and behaviors but also in the structures, strategies, and systems that organizations employ to navigate this evolving landscape. The pandemic has only added to these challenges, making it increasingly difficult for managers and HR practitioners to navigate and manage their workforce (Van Rooyen et al., 2021). Leaders must discover novel and inventive approaches to deal with these workforce concerns if they are to maintain business continuity and support their people through this uncertain time (Hamouche, 2023). Leaders and managers must adopt appropriate leadership styles to effectively manage the necessary transformations within their organizations (Shah, 2023). Similarly, Davis et al. (2022), stated transformational leaders exert influence on their followers' values, beliefs, and goals, in a complex and dynamic process that evolves over time. These leaders propel organizations forward, possessing an understanding of environmental needs and facilitating necessary changes. According to Achunguh (2020), a leader's ability to inspire, encourage, and influence their team is the primary element influencing an employee's decision to stay with the organization. In the highly competitive hospitality industry, as the costs of hiring, training, and orienting new personnel are high, increasing a worker's intention to stay is a major concern for hotel management (Sobaih et al., 2020).

According to research by Abolnasser et al. (2023), transformational leadership is highly applicable to service-oriented industries, such as hospitality, characterized by dynamic and evolving landscapes. This is due to its positive impact on satisfaction and its ability to articulate the organization's direction and mission effectively. Therefore, Ohunakin et al. (2018) emphasized that leadership is an essential factor in predicting the direction of the hospitality sector. For a deeper knowledge of HRM and employee performance behavior in hospitality firms, Khan et al. (2020) suggested that understanding leadership styles as transformational leadership (TFL) is essential.

Transformational leadership, which emphasizes inspiring and motivating subordinates, has garnered significant attention from researchers in recent years due to its alignment with the moral principles of subordinates (Li et al., 2019). This management approach is more suitable for the challenging and dynamic environment seen in the hospitality sector (Toh et al., 2019).

For this purpose, this research investigates transformational leadership indicators in the context of Thailand's hotel industry. The aim is to identify a set of transformational leadership traits that specifically resonate with the context of hotel front office employees in Thailand. By understanding these traits, we can explore how to cultivate transformational leadership within Thai hotels, ultimately leading to improved service quality, adaptability to change, and stronger customer relationships.

Literature Review

Transformational leadership has recently gained interest from researchers all around the world and is now an extensively studied leadership paradigm. Burns (1978) defines transformational leadership as encompassing visions and purposes that are beneficial both educationally and socially. This leadership style is oriented towards serving the common good, addressing the needs of employees, and fostering elevated moral standards among both employees and administrators. In the organizational context, this type of leadership places a strong emphasis on inspiration, uniting employees around a shared mission, and driving the workforce toward enhanced levels of organizational performance. Furthermore, transformational leaders inspire their team members to put the demands of the organization ahead of their interests by assisting in the achievement of the organization's broad objectives (Fayed & Fathy, 2022). They make workers feel proud of their jobs and encourage them to go above and beyond in their work. Offering valuable feedback, transformational leaders persuade their followers to invest additional effort and inspire them to approach complex problems with innovative thinking. (Bakker et al., 2022). Several hotel-related studies conducted in the past have used various configurations of transformational leadership. For instance, Sobaih et al. (2020) used five aspects for their research of luxury hotels in Egypt: Individualized Consideration (IC), Idealized Influence Behaviors (IIB), Inspiration Motivation (IM), Intellectual Stimulation (IS), and Idealized Influence Attributes (IIA). Furthermore, Bass in Andreas (2004)

explains that charisma, which constitutes a key element of TFL, refers to the quality that defines a leader's influence and authority. It is vital to develop a more accurate understanding of transformational leadership considering the divergent viewpoints regarding its conceptualization. To measure the behavioral aspects of transformational leaders, it is necessary to integrate, or at the very least, compile, the items employed in this process. According to Pounder, the following are traits of transformational leadership:

1. Idealized influence attributes (IIA) refer to the leader who demonstrates pride in the organization and sets an example of prioritizing the interests of the group before their own (Linge & Sikalieh, 2019).

2. Idealized influence behaviors (IIB) refer to the leader who consistently emphasizes the importance of cultivating a strong sense of purpose in all their regular communications regarding personal values and beliefs (Buil et al., 2019).

3. Inspiration motivation refers to the leader setting meaningful goals, redirecting focus from self-interest to communal objectives. They foster a safe, supportive environment, promoting followers' concentration on current responsibilities (Lai et al., 2020).

4. Intellectual stimulation refers to the leader who fosters creativity, critical thinking, and innovation among employees. It involves sparking their imagination, enhancing problem-solving skills, and fostering a creative approach to challenges (Vinh et al., 2022).

5. Individualized consideration refers to the leader recognizing and supporting the unique differences and development of everyone, promoting a positive and supportive work environment (Widodo et al. 2020).

This summary explores the impact of transformational leadership on hotel employee performance. It highlights the effectiveness of both the 4-component and 5-component models in contemporary hospitality settings. Both models promote employee motivation, creativity, work efficiency, and organizational commitment. This leads to a more engaged workforce, a culture of learning and development, organizational flexibility, and ultimately, improved performance and goal achievement. The 5-component model emphasizes additional elements: supportive leadership and team building. By providing support and fostering collaboration, leaders create a more positive and productive work environment for hotel employees. Furthermore, the 5-component model offers a more nuanced approach that caters to the specific needs of the hospitality industry for hotel employees. It emphasizes cultural sensitivity, service excellence, innovation and adaptability, individualized

support, a supportive environment, and teamwork and collaboration. However, leaders should adapt their leadership style to the specific needs and context of their hotel and employees. Effectively blending elements from both models can create an environment that fosters change and leads to organizational success.

Conceptual Model

Drawing from the extensive literature review outlined in the preceding section, the study identifies the five dimensions of transformational leadership—idealized influence attributes (IIA), idealized influence behaviors (IIB), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—as the most suitable indicators. Additionally, the measurement scales for each latent variable proposed in Figure 1 have been sourced from various studies examined in the earlier section.

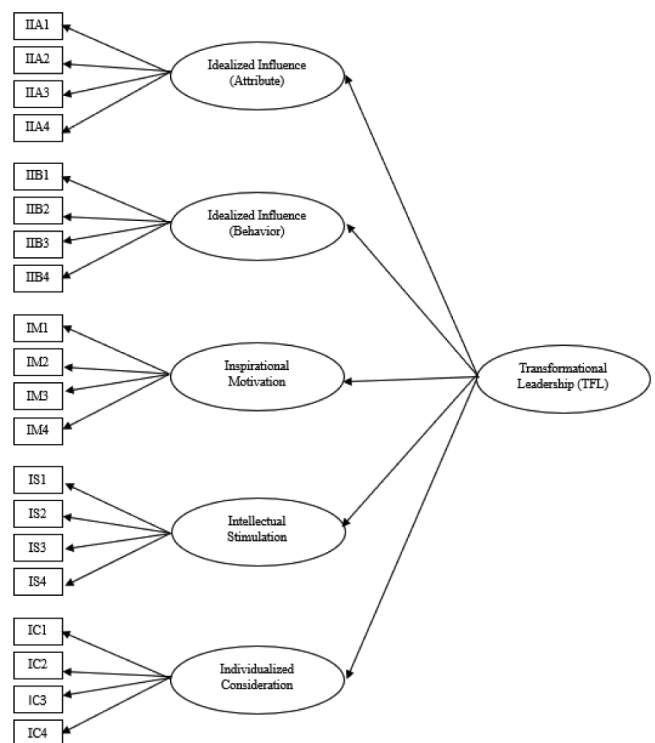


Figure 1 Hypothesized measurement model of transformational leadership (TFL)

Methodology

This study utilized a quantitative research approach with the aim of refining and validating a measurement scale for transformational leadership tailored to the context of the hotel industry in Thailand.

Participants and Data Collection

This study investigated the use of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and therefore required careful consideration of sample size. Hair et al. (2010) recommends a minimum sample size of 200–300, or ten times the number of observed variables. To meet this requirement, a minimum of 300 full-time front-office employees were randomly selected from five-star hotels in Bangkok, Thailand. Moreover, stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representativeness of the sample. Hotels were categorized into three groups: independent hotels, local hotel chains (3 chains), and international hotel chains (4 chains). This approach ensured that front-office employees from each hotel type were included in the survey.

Hence, questionnaires were distributed to front-office employees at ten five-star hotels in Bangkok that were members of the Thai Hotels Association (THA) for the year 2023. This resulted in a total of 350 surveys being distributed to participants.

Survey Instrument (Measurement Scales)

The questionnaire utilized in this study was crafted following an extensive literature review focused on the hospitality industry. To refine and validate the measurement model of transformational leadership within the Thai hotel context, established scales were employed to capture factors outlined in the conceptual model. The study utilized the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Short Form (MLQ 5X) to assess transformational leadership and its sub-dimensions: Idealized Influence (Attributed) [IIA] and Idealized Influence (Behavior) [IIB]. A 20-item transformational leadership scale derived from Avolio and Bass (2004), as used by Sobaih et al. (2020) and Fayed and Fathy (2022), was employed. This scale comprised five dimensions, each with four items: Idealized Influence (Attributed), Idealized Influence (Behavior), Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individual Consideration. Participants rated their responses on a Likert scale from

1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”), providing insights into hotel front office employees’ perceptions of the extent of transformational leadership practiced within the hotels.

To guarantee the accuracy and quality of the questionnaire, rigorous evaluation was conducted by academic experts. A pilot test survey involving 30 front office employees in Bangkok, Thailand, was conducted. The questionnaires underwent scrutiny using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence method (IOC) by five experts. For validity, the criterion required a value exceeding 0.50, and for reliability, it necessitated a value surpassing 0.70, following the guidelines of Tentama and Anindita (2020). The Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) results indicated values surpassing 0.50 for each item. Reliability, evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha, ranged from 0.609 to 0.772, satisfying the predetermined criteria. Hence, it can be concluded that this instrument is deemed appropriate for the research.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including counts, means, percentages, and standard deviations, were computed using SPSS 22.0. Inferential statistical analysis was conducted using Amos 24. CFA was employed to refine and validate the measurement scales TFL. Specifically, second-order CFA was utilized as transformational leadership (TFL) and was conceptualized as a higher-order construct. Before conducting factor analysis, the researcher assessed the preliminary data's adherence to a normal distribution using skewness (Skew.) and kurtosis (Kur.) values. The acceptable range, as per Kline (2015), falls between skewness values of +2 to -2 and kurtosis values of +10 to -10. The data showed satisfactory adherence to normality, with skewness ranging from -0.82 to -0.22 and kurtosis from -0.16 to -1.08.

Following this, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed, wherein any item with a factor loading below 0.5 was removed, as suggested by Hair et al. (2010). Consequently, the variance inflation factor (VIF) values remained below 10, ensuring minimal multicollinearity risk. Tolerance values, crucial for multicollinearity verification according to Angela Trunfio et al. (2021), were also satisfactory: 0.80 for transformational leadership, 0.82 for organizational commitment, and 0.86 for job satisfaction, indicating minimal collinearity among variables.

Results and Discussion

Respondent Profile

The demographic information of the respondents encompassed their age, gender, education level, marital status, monthly income, job positions, and previous work experiences in the hotel sector. 350 respondents provided the frequency and percentage analysis of the respondent data. There were 249 female responders and 101 male responders overall. In reference to the sample of hotel jobs as a receptionist, front desk, cashier, or guest service agent (147 respondents, 42.3%), only a few respondents (163 respondents, 46.6%) are between the ages of 21 and 30; 314 respondents, 89.7 percent, hold a bachelor's degree, and 280 respondents, 80 percent, are single. For 234 respondents (66.9%), most respondents have salaries in the range of 15,001 to 30,000 baht. Over one-third of the participants (147, 42%) reported having one to three years of job experience in the hotel business.

Measurement Model Fit for Transformational Leadership

Initially, the initial measurement model included a total of 20 indicators and the model re-specification involved an examination of modification indices and standardized factor loadings, leading to the removal of two items (IIA1, and IIB1) from the TFL measurement scale. These items were removed because they exhibited low standardized factor loadings (< 0.50) and had high correlations with measurement error. This adjustment was made to enhance the model's fit and ensure that the remaining items accurately represented the TFL construct. The revised measurement model for TFL which included the remaining 18 indicators, was then reanalyzed as depicted in Figure 2. To improve model fit, two items with low factor loadings and high correlation errors were removed. The revised model, now with 18 indicators, demonstrated excellent fit: $\chi^2/df = 1.34$, CFI = 0.98, AGFI = 0.93, GFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.03, and RMR = 0.02.

Reliability and Convergent Validity

Table 1 displays the standardized factor loadings of all 18 indicators onto their corresponding latent variables, along with the outcomes of construct reliability for the revised Transformational Leadership (TFL) measurement model. Moreover, the β weights for the 18 indicators ranged from 0.52 to 0.96, surpassing the recommended threshold of > 0.50 . Among the 18 indicators, 15 exhibited β weights above 0.60. Regarding the first-order latent variables linked to the TFL construct, inspirational motivation attained the highest loading ($\beta = 0.96$), signifying its paramount importance within the TFL construct. This was followed by intellectual stimulation ($\beta = 0.93$), idealized influence behaviors ($\beta = 0.75$), individualized consideration ($\beta = 0.60$), and idealized influence attributes ($\beta = 0.52$). It was discovered that each of these loadings was statistically significant ($p > .001$).

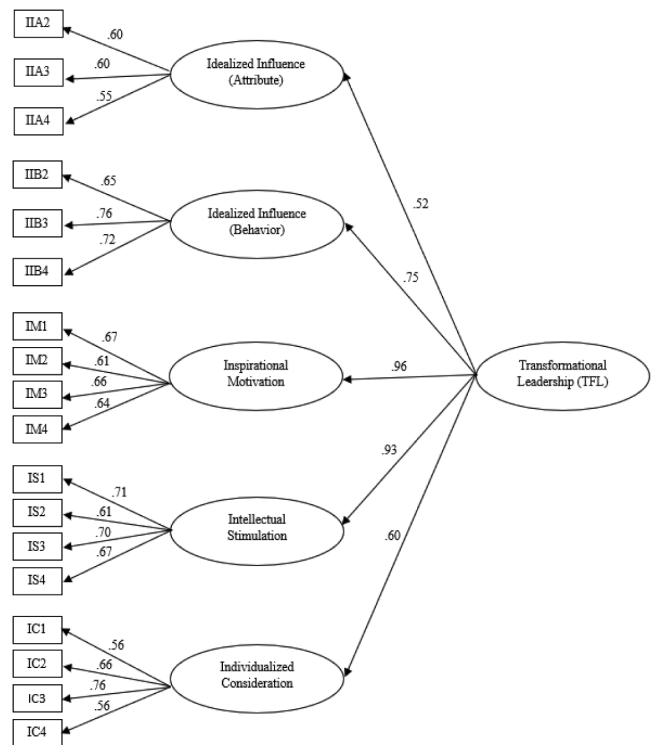


Figure 2 Modified measurement scales of transformational leadership for hotel front office employees in Bangkok, Thailand

Table 1 *M*, *SD*, Factor loadings, AVE, and CR of the measurement model

Construct	Measurement item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Factor loadings	CR	AVE
Transformational Leadership (My manager...)					0.875	0.597
IIA: Idealized influence (attribute)						
IIA2	goes beyond self-interest for the good of the group	4.22	0.72	0.60		
IIA3	acts in ways that builds my respect	4.18	0.71	0.60		
IIA4	displays a sense of power and confidence	4.19	0.73	0.55		
IIB: Idealized influence (behavior)						
IIB2	specifies the importance of having a strong sense of purpose	4.29	0.73	0.65		
IIB3	considers the moral and ethical consequences of decisions	4.24	0.85	0.76		
IIB4	emphasizes the importance of having a collective sense of mission	4.25	0.80	0.72		
IM: Inspirational motivation						
IM1	talks optimistically about the future	4.21	0.72	0.67		
IM2	talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished	4.21	0.74	0.61		
IM3	articulates a compelling vision of the future	4.17	0.72	0.66		
IM4	expresses confidence that goals will be achieved	4.22	0.73	0.64		
IS: Intellectual stimulation						
IS1	re-examines critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate	4.19	0.73	0.71		
IS2	seeks differing perspectives when solving problems	4.18	0.72	0.61		
IS3	gets me to look at problems from many different angles	4.19	0.72	0.70		
IS4	suggests new ways of looking at how to complete assignments	4.24	0.69	0.67		
IC: Individualized consideration						
IC1	spends time teaching and coaching	4.15	0.69	0.56		
IC2	considers me as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations	4.25	0.69	0.66		
IC3	helps me to develop my strengths	4.24	0.71	0.76		
IC4	treats others as an individual rather than just as a member of a group	4.30	0.70	0.56		

The adjusted TFL scales demonstrated an overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.85, with alphas for each first-order construct ranging from 0.61 (idealized influence attributes) to 0.772 (intellectual stimulation), all surpassing the recommended threshold (> 0.60). Additionally, the overall construct reliability (CR) for the TFL construct was 0.875, exceeding the cut-off value of 0.70. Furthermore, the second order TFL construct's average variance extracted (AVE), which was 0.597, was higher than the 0.50 acceptable standards.

The convergent validity of the TFL scales was confirmed by the previously mentioned results, including model fit indices, reliability coefficient, significant factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted, and Composite Reliability, as recommended by Schumacker and Lomax (2010). As a result, the final TFL model's 18 measurement items—3 on IIA, 3 on IIB, 4 on IM, 4 on IS, and 4 on IC—that were loaded on their corresponding latent factors were sufficient and dependable.

This research examines the five dimensions of hotel front-office employees in Bangkok, Thailand, establishing the reliability of empirical data that underscores the importance of transformational leadership components. Consistent with Sobaih et al. (2020), our study similarly adopts the five constructs of Transformational Leadership (TFL) factors for frontline employees, specifically within deluxe hotels in Egypt. Our approach deviates from prior studies, which often examined four dimensions

of transformational leadership, whereas our approach considers a broader range. Research in the Malaysian hospitality industry (Teoh et al., 2022) suggests that inspirational motivation and idealized influence predict employee performance, while individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation do not. Moreover, Bazazo et al. (2016) found that within 5-star hotels in Jordan, administrative leaders particularly excel in exercising the inspirational motivation dimension compared to other dimensions of TFL. Furthermore, to navigate the challenges of a swiftly evolving business landscape, the adoption of transformational leadership behaviors is recommended for managers overseeing front office employees in 4–5-star hotels in Cairo. Finally, Vinh et al. (2022) suggest that a more comprehensive approach involves examining individual leadership sub-dimensions rather than solely relying on a higher-order TFL factor. In the context of the Vietnam tourism industry, the five-factor leadership model consists of vision, personal recognition, inspirational communication, supportive leadership, and intellectual stimulation.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study aimed to enhance and confirm the measurement model and scale of transformational leadership tailored to hotel front-office employees within

the specific context of Thailand, employing Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The results confirmed the presence of the five dimensions, thus validating the constructs of transformational leadership. Based on a thorough literature review, the study identified five essential indicators of transformational leadership, totaling 20 items. The CFA results confirmed that all five factors, comprising 18 items, were relevant to hotel front-office employees.

Regarding the need for renewal, it is acknowledged that transformational leadership holds significant influence when implemented within an educational setting. Inspirational motivation emerges as the most significant indicator of TFL, followed by idealized intellectual stimulation, influence attributes, idealized influence behaviors, and individualized consideration. Front-office employees in hotels who perceive higher levels of inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation are inclined to exhibit attitudes and behaviors that contribute positively to their organizations. Consistent with studies such as Ngai et al. (2016), this study showed that employee performance was greatly enhanced by inspiring motivation. This conclusion is consistent with that of Juma and Ndisya (2016), who showed that employee performance at Safaricom Limited was significantly impacted by differences in inspiring motivation. This study demonstrated a strong beneficial influence of inspirational motivation on employee performance, in contrast to the findings of Brown and Arendt (2011), who found that inspirational motivation had no discernible effect on employee performance at Midwest Iowa State University. Furthermore, this study also highlights the importance of leaders aligning their behavior with the diverse identities of individual followers. This alignment has been demonstrated to enhance job satisfaction, task performance, and reduce the intention to leave the organization. Leaders are advised to tailor their approach, such as embodying idealized influence for trust, using inspirational motivation for positive outcomes, and encouraging rationality and problem-solving skills for outstanding performance. Additionally, personal investment in coaching and mentoring, coupled with a genuine passion for understanding individual needs, is recommended for effective leadership. Also, the proposed research aims to identify new aspects or adaptations of transformational leadership that are particularly effective in the Bangkok hotel industry. The Bangkok-specific model would build upon these core principles while acknowledging the cultural context. Key differences might include shifting focus from individual to team, adapting communication styles, and emphasis on cultural sensitivity (Haider, 2019).

Therefore, the researcher concludes that the measurement model employed in this study effectively captures the positive attributes of TFL among front-office workers in 5-star hotels in Bangkok, Thailand. Additionally, the study underscores the significance of practical contributions to knowledge in the hotel industry. The study's findings offer valuable insights for both academics and industry practitioners. For instance, Human Resources departments can share expertise on effective practices and suggest informed strategies that align with the organization's resource capabilities to improve overall performance. Furthermore, organizations can implement regulations, policies, and rules to guide supervisors and managers in leading their subordinates in accordance with the characteristics of transformational leadership (TFL).

Implication for Practice

The study's findings advocate for hotels to adopt and invest in transformational leadership practices to enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of front-office employees, thereby gaining a competitive edge. The identified five indicators hold significant sway within the hotel front-office context and the broader industry. Therefore, hotels are encouraged to integrate this measurement of transformational leadership as a standardized survey tool. This tool can effectively assess the perceived levels of transformational leadership among front-office employees, offering valuable insights into the actual quality of leadership within the organization. By leveraging this survey tool, hotels can pinpoint areas for improvement and implement tailored transformational leadership practices to meet the needs of front-office employees.

Future Research

The present study specifically chose five key indicators commonly linked with high-performance work practices in the service sector. Moreover, future research could explore incorporating additional indicators related to leadership styles, including transactional, laissez-faire, situational, and coaching leadership. Lastly, incorporating these indicators in leadership measurement could enhance understanding of different aspects of leadership styles among hotel employees.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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