EVALUATION OF THEME PARKS IN TERMS OF VISITOR EXPERIENCE AND EXPERIENCE ECONOMY: THE LAND OF LEGENDS THEME PARK EXAMPLE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates customer experience and behavioral intentions based on the online reviews of theme park visitors. The study's sample comprises reviews posted on Tripadvisor by individuals who visited The Land of Legends, a renowned theme park in Antalya, one of Turkey's premier visitor destinations. A total of 857 online reviews made between 2017 and 2022 were coded using Nvivo, a program for qualitative analysis, and were subjected to content and cluster analysis. The analysis, conducted within the context of Pine and Gilmore's experience economy model, revealed 74% of the visitors' reviews were coded as entertainment, 21% as aesthetic, and 5% as escape experience. In terms of behavioral intention, 74% of the reviews indicated satisfaction, 21% recommendation, and 5% expressed a revisit intention. The cluster analysis showed that revisiting and recommending, entertainment and aesthetics, satisfaction and escape experience were grouped. The managerial implications are discussed based on the study results.

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INTRODUCTION

According to 2019 data, the tourism industry accounts for 4% of global GDP and is one of the world's largest and fastest-growing economic sectors. It is an industry that countries and businesses attach importance to because it creates employment, especially among young people and women, is an important export category, and provides foreign currency inflows (WTO, 2021). Countries seeking to increase revenue from the tourism sector, often considered the backbone of the economy, have turned to product diversification to cater to the needs of various consumers. Theme parks are one example of this diversification, which enhances the destination's image, revitalizes tourism, and boosts economic gains for the local community. They provide educational opportunities for the community by sharing stories about history, science, and technology. Supporting the development of theme parks can offer political advantages (such as availability of loans on more favorable terms from organizations such as the World Bank, Islamic Development Bank, etc.) for many destinations at the local, national, and sometimes international level (Milman, 2010).

Originally designed as centers of attraction, theme parks have evolved into a thriving industry. These entertainment and tourism hubs attract millions of visitors worldwide each year, offering enjoyable experiences and a sense of fantasy and escapism (Zhu et al., 2022). Beyond generating tourism revenue, theme parks significantly contribute to local development. The presence of theme parks, along with hotels, job opportunities, and economic impact, shapes the image of the surrounding areas. Notably, The Walt Disney Company's revenue from its parks, experiences, and products segment reached USD 28.71 billion in 2022, centered around Disneyland—one of the world's premier theme parks. Despite a 30% decline in the global amusement parks industry in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Statista (2023) predicts that the market size will rebound, reaching USD 89.2 billion by 2025. Following the opening of Disneyland in the United States in 1955, the theme park industry experienced rapid growth and eventually expanded to North America, the Caribbean, South America, Asia, and the Pacific Rim (Ali et al., 2018). Today, theme parks are integrating their experience offerings with complementary leisure and hospitality sectors to gain competitive advantage, increase market share, and create ancillary economic impacts (Milman & Tasci, 2018).

The introduction of the experience economy concept by Pine and Gilmore (1998) in the late twentieth century has led service businesses to

pay more attention to experience. Pine and Gilmore evaluated the experience in four categories: entertainment, education, escape, and aesthetics, based on the level of active or passive participation, immersion, and absorption of individuals. In the context of theme parks, rides represent the entertainment aspect by providing a fun and exciting experience. Tours in an animal park represent the educational aspect by offering various learning opportunities. Unique artworks and architectural ambiance stimulate visitors' minds and emotions, representing the aesthetic aspect. Visitors' physical and mental escape from their daily lives represents the escape aspect (Lee et al., 2020). Although theme parks are commonly associated with entertainment, in recent years there has been an increased focus on authenticity and providing extraordinary experiences. A study conducted in China found that visitors highly value authentic experiences in the experience economy. Specifically, authenticity related to the activity in cultural theme parks was found to be more important to visitors than authenticity related to the object (Duan et al., 2019). Based on a study examining satisfaction and loyalty factors in US theme parks using the experiential consumption model, visitors who experience the FEEL dimension, which refers to the emotional responses elicited by the theme park and perceive their visit as good value for money report higher satisfaction (Milman & Tasci, 2018). A study on visitor experience in Malaysian theme parks and its impact on enjoyment, satisfaction, and loyalty found that the physical environment, staff interaction, and interaction with other customers significantly affect both customer satisfaction and loyalty (Ali et al., 2018). Lee et al. (2020) conducted a study on the effects of different types of experiences on visitors' satisfaction with the theme park and their intention to revisit within the scope of the experience economy model. The study found that educational and aesthetic experiences significantly affect visitor satisfaction, while the escape experience is the only important experience that leads to the intention to revisit.

With the rise of information and communication technologies, digitalization, and globalization, individuals have started sharing their experiences through online platforms. Tripadvisor, a platform, has become one of the most visited travel and tourism websites worldwide. It combines user-generated reviews of travel-related content, price comparison tools, and online travel booking services. By 2023, it is projected that there will be over eight million entries and one billion ratings on experiences, accommodation, restaurants, airlines, and cruises (Statista, 2024). Online reviews have been the subject of many studies due to their impact on

information search, decision-making, and perceived value for consumers (Gruen et al., 2005; Browning et al., 2013; Chan et al., 2017) and for businesses (Andreassen & Streukens, 2009). They assist businesses in better meeting customer needs, facilitating managers' decision-making, and adapting existing services according to customer reactions. In the context of tourism, numerous studies have been conducted on accommodation businesses (Browning et al., 2013; Chan et al., 2017; Ahani et al., 2019). However, there is a lack of research on theme parks. Luo et al. (2020) analyzed Tripadvisor reviews of three Disneyland theme parks using topic modeling. They found that 'happy experiences' were the most prominent topic across all three parks. Visitors who shared positive experiences received higher ratings than those who focused on aspects such as value for money, food prices, and cleanliness. The researchers noted that the popularity of this topic varied among different visitor groups and theme parks. Another study using the same method investigated the effects of themes on visitor satisfaction in theme parks through user-generated data. The study found that visitor satisfaction was highly correlated with the service and sense of play in the Shanghai Disney Resort, based on 112.000 reviews posted by visitors. Furthermore, according to Bai et al. (2024), early-stage visitors tend to focus on the experience of specific game elements, while late-stage visitors pay more attention to the overall game experience. A Python program was used to analyze 65.518 reviews of 490 theme parks in China, and the sentiment scores of customer reviews associated with the ratings of each technology application were calculated. The study categorizes technology applications in theme parks into two main categories; supporting technologies, which refer to smart services, ticketing, and in-park transportation; and experiential technologies, which include five aspects of technology; sense, feel, act, think, and relate (Zhang et al., 2022).

To understand the dimensions of the components that make up a visitor's theme park experience, it is necessary to investigate how effective the elements that make up the experience are. Theme parks have become quite remarkable centers of attraction today and have begun to make significant contributions to tourism thanks to the experiences they offer. The biggest share in the importance of theme parks undoubtedly belongs to the environments they create with their unique designs and the experiences they provide to people thanks to these environments. It is expected that this research will contribute to understanding the experiences that theme parks create for visitors. The aim of the research is to approach the theme park experience with an exploratory perspective and to understand what

visitors' experiences are mostly formed by. In addition, the dimensions of theme park experiences and how these dimensions affect the experience will be emphasized. In the research, feedback from visitors who visited The Land of Legends, a renowned theme park in Turkey, was assessed using reviews posted on TripAdvisor.

Academic studies on theme park experience were investigated. They were obtained from "Web of Science", "Google Academic" and "Ebsco Host" platforms, one of the databases of Akdeniz University Library. Studies were searched with keywords such as "Theme Park", "Experience economy", "Theme Park experience". As a result, only 12 studies out of 87 studies were parallel to the research topic. 10 of these 12 studies belong to foreign literature and 2 are domestic literature studies. As there are limited studies on theme parks and visitor experience, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature. Furthermore, identifying the experiences that influence visitors' behavioral intentions is expected to provide valuable insights for theme park operators. The study is structured as follows. The literature review section highlights the concepts of theme parks, the economic impacts they have, and the visitor experience, as well as experience economy. The methodology section covers methodology, data collection, and analysis. The findings section presents the results on visitor experience and behavioral intentions related to reviews. Finally, the study concludes with implications and recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theme Parks and Economic Impacts

Theme parks are cultural landmarks in which entertainment has become a key element of social, economic, and local development in contemporary societies. Additionally, these theme parks contribute to the social impact of these centres by increasing business opportunities for hotels and attractions (Clave, 2007). Theme parks, seen as tourism units from a business perspective, integrate numerous other consumption areas inside and outside the gates of the parks to provide a more comprehensive experience (Liang & Li, 2023).

Individuals visiting theme parks do not typically contemplate their daily lives or the challenges they face but rather focus on the atmosphere they encounter while visiting theme parks and attending shows. The primary objective of visiting theme parks is to escape from the routine of daily life and immerse oneself in a virtual reality that evokes emotions such

as excitement, happiness, and enthusiasm (Lukas, 2008). Theme parks typically revolve around a central theme with various sub-themes. Many theme parks feature thematic visuals, architectural structures, landscaping, costumed staffs, shows, food services, shops, and intangible products and services that contribute to the visitor experience (Milman, 2013). However, it is important to note that there are operational and environmental issues associated with theme parks. These include the high cost due to the need for a large area, significant water usage, seasonal labour force in many regions, and low wages (Braun, 2001). Additionally, Milman et al. (2010) note that the failure of a theme park can have a significant impact on the overall success of a destination.

Theme parks have become increasingly integrated with other tourism and entertainment venues, which results in greater economic profitability. Theme parks now offer a range of online services, including ticket booking, virtual tours, and merchandise sales. Many theme park destinations and local parks have evolved into entertainment centers, providing sophisticated entertainment and recreation-themed experiences. The theme park industry has had a significant impact on politics, society, and the economy, including areas such as landscaping, urban planning, shopping center design, historic preservation, and building architecture (Milman et al., 2010). From a regional perspective, theme parks bring together tourism and regional activities, allowing for the spatial division of industrial activities. Thus, although one part of the region is subject to intensive tourism, other industrial sectors can be promoted while also considering the preservation of nature and ecology (Braun, 2001). The report by the Association des Chambres Françaises de Commerce et d'Industrie (Association of French Chambers of Commerce and Industry) shows that theme parks have three types of economic impact at regional and local level: operational, image, and construction. The first of these is the effects of theme park guests inside or outside the park, resulting from the revenues obtained from the operation of the park. The second is the effects of the economic activities of theme parks in the short and medium term. The last one is the effects on local governments due to taxes. Additionally, local and regional companies, which have limited time, assume responsibility for different stages of the theme park construction project (Clave, 2007). Hotels in and around theme parks are designed to support the destinations and benefit from the continuous flow of visitors. For example, Walt Disney World Orlando, which holds the title of the world's largest theme park, has 140 hotels in its immediate vicinity, with 25 of them located within walking distance to the park. The role of the theme park

industry in creating a global entertainment destination is what impacts the tourism industry (Sona & Lund, 2014). The International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) reports that the U.S. theme park and amusement industry employs over 600.000 seasonal workers each year. In Europe, theme parks and amusement parks are estimated to employ 48.000 full-time workers annually (Milman & Dickson, 2014). Busch Gardens in Tampa, Florida, employs a seasonal workforce of 3.500 people, including 200 long-term workers (Clave, 2007).

Visitor Experience and Experience Economy

Tourism experience has been a significant research topic since the early 1960s and has remained one of the most popular academic subjects in social science literature since the 1970s (Oh et al., 2007; Hosany & Witham, 2010; Park & Santos, 2017). Tourism experiences are created through the processes of visiting, learning, and enjoying a place away from one's home (Jurowski, 2009). These experiences are intrinsic in nature and, therefore, personalized. Each person creates their own experiences based on their background, values, attitudes, and beliefs (Knutson & Berg, 2006). While some tourism sources and stakeholders refer to the 'tourism experience', others use the term 'visitor experience' due to its interrelated nature (Jennings et al., 2009).

Technological advances and more informed and demanding consumers have led to a change in the hospitality and tourism industry, resulting in increased competition. The focus has shifted from facilities and services to providing personalized experiences (Knutson & Beck, 2004). Tourism is an industry that focuses on providing unique experiences to customers. The primary goal is to create enjoyable and memorable experiences for visitors. This includes visiting, seeing, learning, having fun, and experiencing different ways of life. Visitors' experiences in a destination can be behavioural, perceptual, cognitive, or emotional, and can be expressed or implied. Therefore, researchers have emphasised the importance of understanding how the visitor experience is formed because of visiting a destination (Oh et al., 2007). Visitor behaviour is examined in three stages: pre-visit (research and destination selection), during the visit (experience), and post-visit (evaluation of the experience and future behavioral intention). The visitor's decision regarding their intention to revisit a destination in the future and their willingness to recommend it to others expresses their behavioral intention (Chen & Tsai, 2007). The concept of the experience economy, first introduced by Pine and Gilmore, aims to provide high-quality experiences and has become a prevalent concept for

service providers, particularly in the leisure and recreation industry. Pine and Gilmore proposed a model consisting of two dimensions to describe the consumer experience: consumer involvement (active and passive) and connection with the event (absorption and immersion). They derived four experience domains by combining these two levels of each dimension. These four dimensions are differentiated along two axes, namely the degree of customer-visitor involvement and the connection of the customer-visitor to his/her environment. On the customer-visitor involvement axis, the entertainment and aesthetic dimensions represent the customer's passive engagement with business (or destination) offerings, while the education and escape dimensions reflect active engagement. Passive visitors do not directly influence the performance of the destination business, while active participants can personally impact the performance or event that becomes part of their experience (Oh et al., 2007).

When the studies on visitor experience are evaluated, it is seen that some studies are related to behavioral intentions such as satisfaction, revisit intention, recommendation and loyalty (Lin & Kuo, 2016; Milman & Tasci, 2018; Kim, 2018; Zhu et al., 2022; Bayang et al., 2022), some studies are related to the experience economy (Oh et al., 2007; Hosany & Witham, 2010; Lee et al., 2020), and some studies are conducted within the scope of memorable tourism experience (Kim et al., 2012; Park & Santos, 2017; Bigne et al., 2020; Kutlu & Ayyıldız, 2021). In the studies, there is a consensus that tourism experience affects behavioural intentions. Within the scope of memorable tourism experience, it is seen that the studies are related to the components of tourism experience, including hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, participation, and novelty, which were introduced to the literature by Kim et al. (2012). Oh et al. (2007) investigated Pine and Gilmore's four experience domains in bed and breakfast establishments and determined the structural consistency of the experience domains. In terms of individual experience dimensions, they determined that the most dominant determinant of experiential outcomes was "aesthetics", while "escape" and "entertainment" dimensions were not effective on guest satisfaction, arousal, memory, and quality. Similarly, Hosany and Witham (2010) determined that the four experience domains were consistent in terms of cruise experience and found that the aesthetic dimension accounted for most of the variance in predicting arousal, memory, overall perceived quality, satisfaction, and intention to recommend.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Netnography, a qualitative research design, was utilized in this study. Netnography is defined as a unique form of ethnographic research adapted to the possibilities of social interaction types through various computers (Kozinets, 2012). This method, which has a participatory approach to the study of online cultures and communities, is known by names such as "virtual ethnography", "cyber ethnography", "online ethnography", "digital ethnography", "cyber anthropology". However, while these names are generally used by sociologists and other researchers, this method is used under the name "netnography" in marketing research. Unlike ethnography, where data are collected through face-to-face and cultural interactions, netnography collects data through online communication (Özbölük & Dursun, 2015). The abundance of traces left by customers on various online platforms provides valuable data for researchers and managers. Netnography is often described as rich and naturalistic, accurately portraying the lived realities of customers (Heinonen & Medberg, 2018).

Sampling and Data Collection

In the process of gathering data for this study, reviews about 'The Land of Legends', a renowned theme park in Antalya province, were collected from TripAdvisor, the world's most extensive travel platform. The park, the largest of its kind in Turkey, boasts over 20 sections filled with adrenaline-pumping activities. The park's popularity has been on the rise, with visitor numbers increasing from 600.000 in 2017 to 700.000 in 2018, and reaching 900.000 in 2019 (Yorulmazer et al., 2019). Between 2017 and 2022, out of a total of 3.509 reviews in 18 languages on the website, 857 Turkish reviews were manually documented due to language constraints. These Turkish reviews were specifically filtered and searched on the TripAdvisor site for the theme park in question. After making necessary formal and spelling adjustments, the reviews were transferred to a Word document for analysis using a qualitative research software package. First, all the main lines specified in the research are not accessible in terms of time and cost, including programming limitations. Therefore, the rate is limited to the business included in the rates. Another limitation of the research is that the comments about the theme park in question are compiled from a single source.

Data Analysis

The content analysis method was used to analyze the data in this study. The primary purpose of content analysis is to identify concepts and relationships that can help explain the collected data. Data summarized and interpreted in descriptive analyses are subjected to a more comprehensive process in content analyses. As a result, concepts and themes that could not be determined in the descriptive approach can be found with the content analysis method. In this direction, the collected data must first be conceptualized, organized in a logical way according to the concepts that emerge as a result, and as a result, themes explaining the data must be determined (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013: 259). Content analysis is a systematic, repeatable method for reducing many words into fewer content categories based on explicit coding rules. It is used to make inferences by objectively and systematically describing certain features of the data (Stemler, 2001).

To show the clustering of the elements in the second stage, cluster analysis was performed. Cluster analysis, which is a multivariate statistical system, allows any observation set to be separated into unknown clusters or sections in a certain range, while all observations in a group are like each other, while observations in different groups are different. Cluster analysis is a decaying method used to visualize the layer created by groups of nodes that share similar features, data sources, gender, age, and similar words and are coded in a similar way (Konan and Yılmaz, 2019:81). The similarities of the similarities and differences within the scope of the cluster analysis conducted in the study were questioned. When analyzing coding similarity, Jaccard coefficient was selected as the similarity measure. With this method, the closeness of two data sets can be analyzed efficiently without using data redundancy. When the results and prominent titles are analyzed, it is observed whether the represented titles are formed correctly (Niwattanakul et al., 2013, p. 1).

Credibility and Transferability

A number of applications and transfers were made to ensure the credibility and transferability of the study. First, the data collected for evaluation in the study were recorded in a digital environment. Support was received from the theories and approaches presented in the literature of the study in coding the comments. In addition, consultancy was received from academicians who are experts in qualitative research during the coding and analysis stages.

10

For reliability in the research, Kappa Analysis was conducted with experts working as academicians in the Faculty of Education and Faculty of Tourism. Subsequently, we coded the reviews transferred to NVivo analysis, considering the dimensions of Pine and Gilmore's experience economy model, namely entertainment, escape, aesthetics, and education, as well as the visitors' satisfaction, revisiting, and recommending behaviours. Clustering analysis was performed using Jaccard's coefficient to demonstrate the interaction between the codes.

FINDINGS

Results of Validity and Reliability Analysis of Scales

To ensure the reliability of the study, experts conducted a Kappa analysis. The Kappa statistic is commonly used to assess inter-rater reliability. The significance of rater reliability lies in its indication of how accurately the study's data reflects the variables being measured. Interrater reliability refers to the degree to which different data collectors (or raters) assign the same score to an identical variable. Although there are many methods for determining interrater reliability, it has traditionally been quantified as the percentage of agreement, calculated by dividing the number of agreement scores by the total number of scores (McHugh, 2012). In this study, a Kappa analysis was performed with four different experts. The findings are presented in the table below.

Table 1. *Cohen's Kappa Value*

		Kappa statistic value	P value
Theme Park experience coding	Expert 1	1.00	0.00
	Expert 2	1.00	0.00
	Expert 3	1.00	0.00
	Expert 4	1.00	0.00
		Value of Kappa	Level of agreement
Kappa statistic value ranges		<0.00	Poor
		0.00-0.20	Slight
		0.21-0.40	Fair
		0.41-0.60	Moderate
		0.61-0.80	Substantial
		0.81-1.00	Almost perfect

Source: Landis and Koch (1977: 165)

As can be seen in the table, the kappa coefficient of all the experts is 1.00 and the significance value is 0.00. It can be said that the coding made within these values is consistent.

Findings Regarding Visitor Experiences

The coding of visitor experiences comprises 'escape', 'entertainment', 'aesthetics', and 'education', which are the dimensions of Pine and Gilmore's experience economy model. This study aimed to interpret the statements in the coding created during content analysis using the dimensions of the experience economy model. Upon analyzing visitor reviews, no reviews were found that reflected the education dimension of the model. Akel and Çakır (2022) stated in their study that there was no statistically significant difference between Turkish-Russian, Russian-Arab, Russian-British and Arab-British visitors and that the entertainment, aesthetic, escape and educational experiences offered in the theme park hotel led to similar results. The results of the coding of visitor experiences are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Reference distribution of visitor experience codes*

Codes	Number of reviews	%
Escape	12	5
Aesthetics	53	21
Entertainment	184	74

Upon analyzing the reference distribution in Table 2, it is evident that the entertainment codes have the largest share, accounting for 74%. This is followed by the aesthetics code, which accounts for 21%, and the escape code, which accounts for 5%. The entertainment code received 184 reviews, while the aesthetic code and escape code received 53 and 12 reviews, respectively. Although the majority of reviews were collected under the category of entertainment, the fewest reviews were made for the category of escape. Given that the primary objective of theme parks is to offer a secure, hygienic, visually appealing, and imaginative recreational environment (Milman, 2010), it is reasonable to interpret the entertainment aspect as paramount.

Entertainment Dimension

Upon scrutinizing the feedback from guests who visited the theme park, it becomes apparent that a substantial portion of their enjoyment stems from riding the amusement train. The inherent fun nature of theme parks is reflected in their reviews. Some reviews from visitors are presented below.

"The experience was delightful and enjoyable. I would recommend it to everyone. The hyper coaster was exceptional, and I rode it multiple times".

"The Hyper train is truly extraordinary and splendid. It's generally designed for a younger audience, catering to those seeking thrill and adrenaline. The 'Zippy Zappy' train and 'Family' train are designed as the perfect ride for families, catering to those who prefer a calm experience and do not require a high adrenaline rush".

"This is a place that is definitely worth a try. We were extremely satisfied and felt we got our money's worth. I believe the hyper coaster should be on everyone's bucket list".

It is observed that another crucial aspect of the theme park's entertainment experiences involves families with children. A significant portion of the feedback from these families about their entertainment experiences pertains to the areas specifically designed for children. Visitors shared their experience in this regard as follows:

"We are big fans of the Land of Legend family. With the addition of Masha and the Big Bear to the dry park, the entertainment area for young children has expanded. It's not just a place for children, but also a place that adults find interesting to visit. The fun is limitless. The quality is undeniable. Everything is very beautiful. It's a quality holiday".

"We visited this park for the first time with our children. Our kids were captivated by the Masha and the Big Bear shows, we had a blast, the staff is highly competent, the interior is a true Land of Legends ;)".

"We were awestruck by the legendary world of Legends, and our children adored the vibrant area of Masha and the Big Bear and had a great time. We hope to see each other again".

The reviews above demonstrate that 'Masha and the Big Bear', one of the most popular cartoons in Turkey, has had a significant impact on families with children. This serves as an example of how a central theme can be used in theme parks to integrate the park's structure and organization with physical expressions. Milman (2010) stated that visitors to the Magic Kingdom of Walt Disney World in Florida experience the Mickey Mouse motif through life-size traveling characters, the architecture of Mickey's hometown and residence, costumes, shows, and parades.

A significant number of visitors who shared their experiences highlighted the shows at the theme park when discussing the elements that entertained them. Among the shows at the theme park, the dolphin and water shows are particularly noteworthy. Visitors shared their experience on this matter as follows:

"I take pride in the fact that there's a hotel with such an amazing aura in Turkey. The water fountains designed for cooling off are incredibly relaxing and entertaining, and the dolphin shows in the modern facility add a different level of excitement and adrenaline for the family. You might recall the night shows of the mysterious party or the knight's night in

Venice, and what's more, the gondolas take you around in front of the shopping mall until the evening, giving you the feeling of wandering through the historic streets of Venice. The matching costume colors of the people riding the gondolas contribute to the harmony, making you feel as if you were in Venice".

"The dolphin show was outstanding. To my knowledge, this is the only location in Turkey that hosts a dolphin show. It also boasts a stunning aquapark and wave pool. The amusement park section is among the best in Turkey. We completely lost track of time".

Another visitor highlighted the shows that contribute to the entertainment experience in the theme park, saying:

"You will feel as if you're in a fairy tale. The water and light show is simply breathtaking. Make sure not to miss the night shows."

Aesthetic Dimension

Upon examining the experiences of guests who visited the theme park, it was noted in their reviews that they were particularly impressed by the sections themed around Masha and the Bear. These reviews were predominantly from families with children who expressed great appreciation for this thematic area, highlighting it as one of the areas where their children had the most fun in the theme park. Visitors described their aesthetic experience as follows:

"There are enjoyable activities and toys for both children and adults. The roller coaster and its variations, especially the village of Masha and the Bear, are fantastic".

"It's very fun, the staff is friendly, it's definitely a place to bring children along. The Masha and the Bear show and the decor of the rooms are very appealing".

Another visitor shared their experience about this intriguing thematic area of the theme park, stating:

"We were captivated by the legendary world of Legends, and our children were enamored with the vibrant area of Masha and the Bear. They had a great time. We hope to visit again".

It appears that one of the key aspects highlighted by visitors when evaluating their theme park experience from an aesthetic standpoint is the park's architecture. The reviews indicate that the theme park's architecture was highly admired and found to be unique. It left a lasting impression on its visitors and created fond memories. Some visitors expressed their appreciation as follows:

"It's definitely worth visiting for the fun and entertainment. You can easily spend a full day here. There are numerous slides that I haven't tried yet. The architecture is truly amazing".

"The staff is extremely helpful, the activities are a lot of fun for the kids, and the space is spacious and clean. The landscape and architecture are truly beautiful".

"The Land of Legends boasts a stunning architecture, its location is beautiful, and there are activities at certain times that allow for taking magnificent photographs".

"It's an excellent facility. It genuinely gave me the feeling of being on a trip abroad, with its wonderfully well-designed architecture and the presence of foreign visitors everywhere. You get to witness a spectacular visual feast with amazing water shows and incredible animations. Even though there's a bit of a wait in line, I recommend taking a gondola ride on the canal".

In aesthetic experiences, which represent passive participation and immersion, consumers passively accept the environment as it is presented to them, without any interaction or influence on the environment. Aesthetic experiences are the enjoyment of being in an environment without altering it. Visitors may visit Cape Cod to appreciate the tranquility of the beach and the rhythm of the Atlantic Ocean (Oh et al., 2007). Therefore, it can be said that the physical elements of the theme park contribute to the aesthetic experience.

Escape Dimension

Guests who visited the theme park evaluated their experience in terms of the 'Escape' dimension, commenting that the theme park provided a wonderful respite from their everyday lives. They emphasized the entertainment and relaxation the theme park offered and specifically mentioned that it provided a delightful experience. Here are some of their reviews:

"We all came here upon the recommendation of my friends. The coasters were especially fun. There are many activities not only for children but also for young people".

"I came here with my friends, we liked it very much, it is a great activity for a one-day getaway, good price performance".

"We have been staying here for 10 days, but it is not possible to get bored here even for a minute. Everything is very well thought out. It is literally a heavenly place for children. We, as adults, have returned to our childhood and are enjoying the adrenaline rush".

The escape experience, which refers to escape from daily routine (Oh et al., 2007), allows one to escape through fantasy in the theme park context

(Sun & Uysal, 1994). Lee et al. (2020) found that visitors who are fully engaged in theme park activities experience a new sense of self, fascinated by the events and escaping from their routine lives. Furthermore, their research identified escape as the most significant factor influencing revisit intention.

Findings Regarding Behavioral Intentions

In this section of the study, findings about behavioral intentions were investigated using the criteria of satisfaction, revisit, and recommendation, and the reviews were classified appropriately. Table 3 shows the findings from coding about behavioral intentions.

Table 3. *Reference distribution of behavioral intention codes*

Codes	Number of reviews	%
Revisit intention	12	5
Recommendation	53	21
Satisfaction	184	74
Total	**588**	**100**

When the reference distribution in the table is analyzed, it is clear that the codes collected under the topic of satisfaction have the highest percentage (59%). While the title of revisit intention, which comes after the title of satisfaction, has the second highest share (21%), the title of recommending has a value similar to the title of revisiting and ranks third (20%).

Satisfaction

The predominant element highlighted by theme park visitors regarding their experience was satisfaction. This was mirrored in the volume of reviews received, with 'satisfaction' emerging as the most frequently coded sentiment. The guests articulated their satisfaction in various ways. Some visitors expressed contentment with the thematic aspects of the theme park, while others appreciated the attentiveness and amiability of the staff. Some guests conveyed their enjoyment and satisfaction with the aqua park section, while others expressed delight in the nostalgic experience, stating that they felt as though they had returned to their childhood. Indeed, the feedback about the staff's attentiveness and amiable service was particularly emphasized, significantly influencing the visitors' reviews. It can be inferred from these reviews that both the quality of physical facilities and staff play a crucial role in shaping satisfaction. This is corroborated by Bai et al. (2024), who found a strong correlation between theme park

visitors' satisfaction and the service and gaming aspects. Similarly, studies by Ali et al. (2018) and Zhu et al. (2022) revealed that the physical environment, interactions with staff, and interactions with other customers significantly influence customer satisfaction. Furthermore, a study by Lee et al. (2020) determined that the entertainment, educational, escapist, and aesthetic experiences offered by theme parks also contribute to visitor satisfaction.

One visitor expressed:

"This is the finest theme park I've ever visited. I had an extraordinarily delightful day and experienced unforgettable moments. The staff is exceptionally cordial".

Another visitor recounted their wonderful day at the theme park and expressed gratitude towards the employees and theme park managers for their attentiveness and assistance:

"We had complimentary access to the Land of Legends as we were staying at Rixos. It's an absolutely remarkable park with fantastic activities for children of all ages and adults. It's worth dedicating a day to visit here in Antalya and enjoy with your children. The employees' attentiveness, helpfulness, and friendly demeanor should not be overlooked. Kudos to both the creators and the managers of the park".

Some guests were so captivated and satisfied with their enjoyable day at the park that they compared it to the most renowned theme parks globally, even asserting that it was more entertaining:

"Our favorite attractions were the Tycoon coaster and the family coaster. The aquaparks were also very enjoyable. It was wonderful to have a variety of entertainment options for my two children of different ages. In my view, it was more entertaining than Disneyland. Although there are fewer attractions than Disneyland, the water parks and wave pool certainly set it apart."

Visitors expressed their pride in having such an establishment in their country and, as seen in the majority of the reviews, they voiced their satisfaction with the staff at the facility.

One visitor stated: *"Each time we visit, we take pride in having such a facility in our country. The children adore the roller coasters. All the employees are extremely courteous and helpful."*

The visitors were highly appreciative of the theme park staff's attentive and friendly service towards the visitors and their children. In fact, according to the reviews, this has become the most significant factor contributing to the visitors' satisfaction. This indicates the effective

utilization of human resources by the theme park management and their concern for their guests and their experiences at the theme park.

One visitor expressed his satisfaction with the theme park and its staff as follows: *"The park offers opportunities that can delight every family with children. The children are having an incredible amount of fun. The employees are friendly and attentive. They pay so much attention to the children that we, as adults, found the opportunity to rest very comfortably. The evening shows captivated the children. The evening activities are very enjoyable, the staff enjoy playing with the children. They take care of children with pleasure, not reluctantly. The food, shopping, and restaurants are amazing. I highly recommend not missing out on this experience."*

An intriguing aspect of the theme park is its ability to leave a lasting impression on its visitors. Numerous elements, ranging from the park's thematic features to the quality of service it provides, have shaped the experiences of its guests, leading them to provide detailed reviews. This reflects the well-planned and successful operation of the theme park. Indeed, as Kim et al. (2012) suggest, the concept of a memorable tourism experience pertains to those experiences that are selectively formed from defined tourism experiences and can be recalled post-trip. These memorable tourism experiences hold significant importance as they are the only experiences that will impact a visitor's future decision-making process. This underscores the value of creating positive and memorable experiences for visitors.

A visitor detailed their experience as follows: *"Land of Legends is indeed a magical place… We spent 5 days there with our two children and have just departed. The theme park is truly extraordinary… Both our children and we had a delightful time with both the play units and the Aqua parks. Thanks to the shopping center housing world-renowned brands, you can even fulfill your holiday needs here. The food is incredibly tasty and varied. The rooms are impeccably clean and have a fantastic children's concept. The staff members are very attentive, courteous, and friendly. You certainly get value for your money… Thank you, Land of Legends family… We look forward to our next visit."*

Revisit Intention

Unsatisfied visitors are less likely to revisit tourism centers. Therefore, measuring and evaluating the satisfaction of tourism centers is important for the survival, development, and success of these centers (Çakır & Akel, 2022). Visitors to the theme park expressed admiration for its various attractions, and their enjoyment was evident in their feedback. They shared that they had a delightful time and expressed a desire to return for a similar experience. These sentiments were prominently featured in the reviews,

contributing significantly to the overall feedback. The dolphin shows, in particular, were a major draw for visitors, providing them with a memorable experience and prompting many to mention in their reviews how these shows influenced their decision to return. According to Wei et al. (2022), visitors who have a satisfying experience at a theme park are likely to revisit. Similarly, Lee et al. (2020) found that the escapism provided by the theme park experience greatly influences visitors' intention to return. Here are some reviews from the visitors:

"The dolphin show was the highlight of our visit and we thoroughly enjoyed it. We are looking forward to returning. We appreciate the experience".

"The experience was fantastic, particularly the dolphin show. I would certainly contemplate a return visit".

"We were very pleased, especially the children who absolutely loved it. Despite the somewhat high entrance and food and beverage costs, the long walk from the entrance to the park in the summer heat, and the slightly overpriced dolphin swimming shows, we found value in most of the activities included in the entrance fee and thoroughly enjoyed them. Will we return? Yes".

"It is very successful, it is a must-see".

Another factor that encouraged visitors to return was the attractions at the theme park. Visitors particularly enjoyed the rollercoasters and shared their experiences in their reviews. Some of the visitor reviews on the subject are as follows:

"I am eager to return and experience the new rollercoasters. I spent the entire day at the park with my friends and we had a blast".

"The park is fantastic, and the staff are attentive and interested. I make it a point to visit every year, especially for the Hypercoaster".

"The theme park is splendid, we visit every year and have a great time. We are already looking forward to next year! The Hypercoaster was a particular favorite of ours".

The quality of service and the attentiveness of the staff were also significant factors in visitors' intent to return to the theme park. These aspects were frequently mentioned in visitor reviews, highlighting the importance of the services provided in motivating repeat visits. A study on a theme park in Malaysia evaluated various dimensions of Theme Park Service Quality (Staff Attitude, Staff Professionalism, Facilities, Cleanliness, Signs, Ride Attraction, Waiting Time, Food and Beverage Outlet, Technologies, and Safety and Security) and found that these factors influenced visitors' intention to revisit (Bayang et al., 2022). Here are some

visitor reviews reflecting the impact of service quality on their intention to revisit:

"The staff were extremely helpful. This place is a must-visit. It's a very professional and enjoyable place. We felt safe and had an incredible time everywhere. Today was unforgettable for us. We plan to return next year from Istanbul".

"The staff are very efficient and their friendliness boosts motivation. It was a fun place where I had a great time. I am looking forward to visiting again".

"I visited this facility with a group of friends and it was truly exceptional. The staff were always ready to assist us throughout the day. We were particularly impressed by the dolphin show and found the animals to be incredibly talented. The slide area was a bit crowded, which I believe is a testament to the excellence of this place. The popularity of this place was not an issue for me. The rollercoaster was thrilling, it was a bit scary but definitely worth it. We plan to return with my younger cousins in September".

"This is a wonderful facility that has everything. The staff were friendly, and we enjoyed the slides and dolphin shows. When you visit, don't miss out on the 5D experience, dolphin shows, and Typhoon Coaster. Rest assured, the entry fee is worth it. The food and drink prices are reasonable, with options to suit all budgets. The Aqua section has many slides, there might be a bit of a wait, but it's worth it because they are all fun. We will seize the opportunity to visit again when we can".

Recommendation

A significant behavioral intention observed among theme park visitors is the propensity to recommend. The formation of this intention is largely influenced by families with children who share their experiences at the theme park and subsequently, those who visit based on these recommendations intend to further recommend it to other families with children. Lin and Kuo's (2016) research on the influence of tourism experience on behavior revealed that satisfaction positively impacts the intention to recommend. Some reviews on the subject are provided below:

"The theme park is situated in Belek Kadriye and features stunning light shows at night. It opens at 10:00 am, and Sütbeyaz offers a delicious mixed breakfast. The yoghurt ice cream shop has been successful. It should be noted that entrance to the theme park is a separate fee, as is swimming with dolphins. Additionally, food and drinks are available for purchase at an additional cost. The wave pool is particularly enjoyable and I would recommend it to families with children. There is a car park available. The shopping and hotel area are free of charge".

"During the January semester holiday, we stayed at The Land of Legends hotel theme park for four days. The park is of high quality and rich in content, with a professional and serious organization…It can be compared to Turkish Disneyland, although there are height and

age restrictions for children, limiting their activities. However, there is unlimited entertainment for adults. We were unable to see the summer section, but the artificial beaches and water slides appeared appealing. I highly recommend this facility to families with children in all seasons".

"It offers excellent entertainment areas for children, including a water skiing facility and shows featuring Masha and the Big Bear that are particularly enjoyable for young children aged 6-9 years old. This facility is especially recommended for families".

"The place is highly recommended for those who have a passion for different excitements, experiences, and adrenaline. It is also suitable for families with small children. The staff is friendly and the overall experience is excellent 🙏 ❤️".

In the process of analyzing the reviews related to experiences that fostered the intention to recommend, it was evident that visitors expressed high levels of satisfaction with the staff and the positive service they received. The reviews mirrored the high standard of service delivered by the employees, which subsequently led to the development of a recommending behavior. The following review serves as an illustration of this:

"The facility is hygienic and secure, offering a wide range of activities for both children and adults. The staff is highly attentive and courteous. I would like to express my gratitude to the Guest Relations team for their assistance in retrieving my sunglasses, which I had misplaced in the theme park several days prior. I highly recommend the annual Legendary membership".

"The facility is large and well-maintained. The staff are polite and provide clear instructions for safety. It is a great place that I recommend to everyone".

"We visited on the recommendation of friends and were impressed with the friendly and helpful staff. I highly recommend it".

The examples above demonstrate that visitors place more trust in recommendations from non-commercial sources, such as family and friends. Visitors' satisfaction with the services they receive has an impact on their intention to recommend (Hosany & Witham, 2010).

Cluster Analysis Findings

A clustering analysis was performed using Jaccard's coefficient to illustrate the interplay among the codes. The results of the clustering analysis are outlined below. The codes for aesthetics, entertainment, and escape, which encapsulate the theme park experience, along with the codes for satisfaction, recommendation, and revisit, which elucidate visitors' behavioural intentions, were incorporated into the clustering analysis.

Consequently, an effort was made to uncover the clustering and interactions among the codes included in the analysis. The diagrammatic representation of the clustering analysis is presented in Figure 1 below.
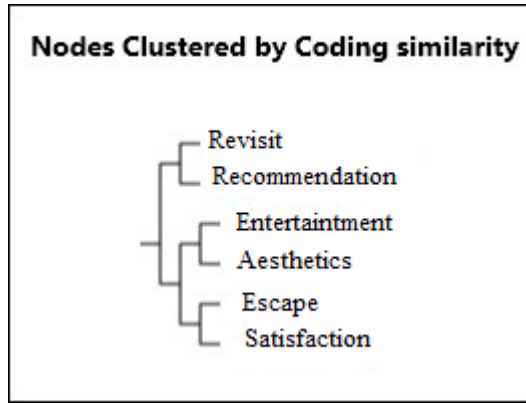

Figure 1. *Clustering Analysis Diagram*

The first cluster discernible in the diagram represents a combination of revisiting and recommending. This clustering suggests that individuals who frequent theme parks have a propensity to both revisit and advocate their experiences to others. These inclinations were evident in the feedback provided by visitors recounting their experiences. Some of the reviews made by visitors are given below:

"It was really super, we were satisfied with everything, I definitely plan to come back again, I will recommend this place to my friends".

"Everything was very nice and we will come again. I recommend it to everyone, everyone should come and see it. We had a lot of fun, it was great".

"The wave pool was very nice, we had a lot of fun. We will definitely come back next year. We will also recommend it to our friends. Thanks for everything..."

Individuals seeking entertainment also value the presence of aesthetic elements to enrich their experience. Consequently, the more abundant the aesthetic components, the more pleasurable the entertainment experience becomes. This amalgamation of entertainment and aesthetics is consistent with the model proposed by Pine and Gilmore, as outlined in the literature. According to this model, individuals who partake in theme park experiences that fall within the entertainment and aesthetic cluster are considered passive participants. According to Pine and Gilmore (2011), offering experiences is very important in order to create a perceived value in the eyes of service users in the experience economy. They also emphasized that other businesses such as Disneyland should focus on experiential values and experiences instead of goods and services. In

addition, theme parks such as Universal Studios have followed in Disneyland's footsteps. Therefore, theme parks, especially Disneyland, are the pioneers of the experience economy (Geissler & Rucks, 2011: 128). The aim of these parks is not only to entertain, but also to include their guests in another world with a story. In addition to entertainment, they offer their guests an integrated experience including sight, sound, taste, smell and words. In addition, theme restaurants such as Teatro ZinZanni, Hard Rock Cafe, Rainforest Cafe and Ed Debevic's offer dining experiences, while Apple makes a difference by staging experiences in addition to offering only goods and services to its customers in its stores (Akel, 2020: 36-37). Below are some reviews from visitors who have experienced both entertainment and aesthetic experiences:

"We visited the entertainment facility for a day and found all areas and activities to be enjoyable. The pools are designed with various concepts, providing a diverse experience. Families with children can enjoy the ideal playgrounds and fun toys, with the skyfighter being a particularly incredible experience. The staff were all friendly and helpful".

"Overall, we had a great time at the facility with our daughter. The decoration, staff, entertainment, and shows at the facility were impressive".

It can be argued that individuals who experience a sense of escape during their visit tend to report higher levels of satisfaction. This is supported by the diagram, which shows a clear clustering of satisfaction scores with escape experiences. Visitors who report having an escape experience also tend to report higher levels of satisfaction. For instance, one visitor commented:

"We had a fantastic weekend with the children. The location is perfect for a weekend getaway".

IMPLICATIONS

In the analysis of the coding pertinent to the entertainment dimension, the constituents of the entertainment factor encompass the fun train, thematic zones designed for children, and activities comprising dolphin and water shows. These elements significantly contributed to the establishment of the entertainment dimension and were recurrently cited in the reviews. The prevalence of reviews, particularly those related to the entertainment dimension, implies that the theme park experiences of visitors are predominantly driven by entertainment motivation. The second most commented dimension is the aesthetic dimension. The coding showed that "the Masha and the Big Bear" thematic area's magnificent appearance and

the general architecture of the theme park were highly appreciated in terms of aesthetics. This situation was reflected positively in the reviews made, indicating that aesthetic elements contribute to making the visitor experience memorable. The coding revealed that the most prominent aspect of the escape dimension was the desire to break away from daily routines. This suggests that theme parks serve as an escape for both adults and children.

The themes in the behavioral intention section were derived from factors such as satisfaction, the revisit intention, and the recommendation, as identified in the literature. In terms of satisfaction, visitors expressed contentment with the approach of the theme park employees towards them and their children, which was marked by keen interest and amiable service. Based on the coded reviews, this aspect seems to be the most substantial factor contributing to visitor satisfaction. This indicates an effective deployment of human resources by the theme park management and a robust dedication to augmenting the guest experience. Dolphin shows have gained popularity due to visitors' pursuit of a memorable experience. The presence of attractions such as roller coasters and the amiable demeanor of the employees also enhance the overall allure of the venue. As per the reviews, the quality of the activities, facilities, and services offered plays a crucial role in encouraging visitors to return to the theme park. Moreover, families with children often visit the park based on recommendations, which is perceived as an indicator of the park's success. Satisfaction with the quality of service provided by the staff is another significant factor. It is essential to maintain an objective stance and refrain from subjective evaluations when discussing this topic.

The thematic clustering indicates that the intention to revisit and recommend, along with the entertainment and aesthetic experience, and the satisfaction and escape experience, are grouped together. This grouping aligns with Pine and Gilmore's model, which also clusters entertainment and aesthetic experiences based on passive participation. This suggests a correlation between the visitors' passive participation in entertainment and aesthetic experiences and their intentions to revisit and recommend the theme park, further enhancing their satisfaction and escape experiences.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Theme parks are establishments engineered to generate revenue based on visitor count. It's crucial to underscore that this assertion is an objective evaluation and should be distinctly identified as such. The escalating

competition among theme parks and their burgeoning popularity have resulted in a surge in visitor numbers. Consequently, theme parks have evolved into comprehensive attraction centers that offer a holistic experience beyond mere entertainment. The influence of visitor experiences on the visitor count has progressively become paramount for theme parks. As a result, they have tailored their parks and services with a focus on crafting experiences.

When the experiences related to theme parks are examined within the framework of all these, it is observed how eager The Land of Legends theme park is to create an unforgettable entertainment experience and how devotedly it works in this regard. Especially in the experience examination of the entertainment and aesthetic dimensions, the significant effect of thematic elements that come to the forefront on visitors shows how detailed and meticulously they are worked on. In addition, the feature of the theme park, which is frequently encountered in comments in the escape dimension, as a complete escape address from daily life, is again among the prominent elements. When the elements that form behavioral intentions are considered, it is stated that the personnel working in the formation of satisfaction and revisit intentions are especially professional and that they do their job by touching people's experiences, and it is revealed how successful the park is in terms of personnel employment and management. Finally, the shows and events within the theme park, which have a very important place in the formation of the recommendation intention, enlighten us on how successfully these events are designed, planned and implemented.

The findings of the research suggest that the industry, local governments, and academic institutions should place a high priority on the quality of staff service to cultivate a positive experience:

• It is crucial for industry leaders to acknowledge this importance and adopt a meticulous approach towards human resources. The quality of service is amplified by employing personnel who are well-trained and have undergone certain levels of vetting. This subsequently contributes to a positive experience for visitors. As theme parks continue to witness a surge in popularity, as evidenced by the increasing visitor count, it becomes imperative to allocate substantial portions of tourism investments towards them.

• It is suggested that managers should focus more on experiences to improve satisfaction and loyalty intentions. The focus should be on increasing visitors' experiences with impressive and appealing activities in

entertainment, education, aesthetics and escape elements. Managers should provide visitors with the opportunity to learn while having fun, have fun while learning, and to get away from the boring and monotonous real life and reach the aesthetic.

- The tourism and entertainment sector and theme parks and hotels operating in this sector should plan their activities carefully. In addition to well-trained mascots, costumed characters and service personnel, theme parks and hotels need to increase their activities to increase their attractiveness and make a difference. Moreover, they can change the theme and the uniforms of the employees for special days and periods. However, it should not be forgotten that the themes used should be appropriate for the sector, brand and content of the business and add value (Schmitt, 1999).

- Exciting, new and up-to-date entertainment areas are very important and necessary to meet the demand and create new demand. Therefore, theme parks require high investment and theme park managers should constantly develop and update their services and experiences by taking this into account. Managers should develop the necessary arrangements and strategies for visitors looking for variety and differentiation. Compared to the past, theme parks require differentiation and variety because they appeal not only to children but also to adults (Akel, 2020).

- Furthermore, given the potential visitor influx and revenue generation of theme parks, it is advisable to design thematic elements in line with the trending characters of the time and create corresponding units. Local governments can bolster the employment potential of theme parks by initiating various training courses to equip personnel with the skills required to work in theme parks. Upon completion of these courses, candidates can be directed towards employment in theme parks, thereby contributing to the local economy and mitigating unemployment rates.

Theme parks, being a relatively nascent research topic in domestic literature, necessitate an objective approach and the avoidance of subjective evaluations. To further the development of the theme park concept in Turkey, it would be advantageous to conduct SWOT analyses and draw comparisons with international theme park examples. Additionally, research into service quality is recommended to enhance overall customer satisfaction. The execution of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method research can enrich our comprehension of theme parks. Furthermore, intercultural research within the context of theme parks can yield valuable insights. Visitor density is an important factor to consider when researching the carrying capacity of theme parks.

The limitations of the study are that only reviews written in Turkish were analyzed and the data were collected from only one platform. In addition, the inability to generalize the results obtained due to the qualitative nature of the reviews is another limitation. Tripadvisor reviews may not represent the full spectrum of visitors as they are often posted by more engaged or motivated customers. In future studies, more comprehensive analyses can be carried out with reviews from different platforms, including different languages.

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