



ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ | RESEARCH ARTICLE

BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF POSTGRADUATE THESES WRITTEN ON
DIGITAL MARKETING IN TOURISM SECTOR IN TURKEY

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Abstract

This study uses bibliometric analysis to evaluate postgraduate theses on digital marketing in the tourism sector. In this context, 16 thesis studies obtained from the National Thesis Centre (YÖKTEZ) database between 2016-2023 were examined. These studies were evaluated according to their keywords, years, types, and research methods. The findings show that the number of undergraduate theses written in the digital marketing field in Turkey's tourism sector is increasing. It was determined that almost all the theses were written at the master's level, using qualitative research methods, and focused on hotel businesses, which are the cornerstone of the sector. The study's findings will constitute a vital source for revealing the status of academic research on digital marketing practices in tourism and identifying trends in this field. In addition, it is recommended that it be expanded to include scientific articles to enrich the literature on this subject for future research.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Tourism, Bibliometric Analysis, Postgraduate Theses

TÜRKİYE'DE TURİZM SEKTÖRÜNDE DİJİTAL PAZARLAMA ÜZERİNE YAZILMIŞ LİSANSÜSTÜ TEZLERİN BİBLİYOMETRİK ANALİZİ

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı turizm sektöründe dijital pazarlama üzerine yazılan lisansüstü tezleri bibliyometrik analiz yönteminden yararlanarak değerlendirmektir. Bu kapsamda 2016-2023 yılları arasında Ulusal Tez Merkezi (YÖKTEZ) veri tabanından elde edilen 16 tez çalışması incelenmiştir. İncelenen bu çalışmaların anahtar kelimelerine, yıllarına, türlerine ve araştırma yöntemlerine göre değerlendirilmesi yapılmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular Türkiye'de turizm sektöründe dijital pazarlama alanında yazılan lisansüstü tezlerin giderek arttığını göstermektedir. Tezlerin neredeyse tamamının yüksek lisans düzeyinde, nitel araştırma yöntemleri kullanılarak yazıldığı ve sektörünün temel taşı olan otel işletmeleri üzerine yoğunlaştığı tespit edilmiştir. Çalışmanın bulguları turizm alanında dijital pazarlama uygulamalarına yönelik akademik araştırmaların durumunu ortaya koymak ve bu alandaki eğilimleri belirlemek için önemli bir kaynak oluşturacaktır. Ayrıca, bilimsel makalelerin de dahil olduğu şekilde bu alandaki literatürü zenginleştirmek için gelecekteki araştırmaların genişletilmesi önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dijital Pazarlama, Turizm, Bibliyometrik Analiz, Lisansüstü Tezler

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technology developments have led to significant changes in how companies do business and in all kinds of communication with their stakeholders. Traditional marketing has lost its importance and digital marketing applications have emerged. In this way, businesses can offer personalized products and services to consumers by following their every behavior 24/7 through digital media.

Developments in information and communication technology have transformed the tourism sector, which is a part of the global economy (Balyalı and İlhan, 2023). Today, intelligent applications are used in areas where tourism services are provided, such as cities, destinations, airports, harbors, restaurants, and hotels (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2013). Consumers can access unlimited sources of information required in the product purchase decision process in many digital media, especially mobile applications used on smartphones and tablets they carry with them (Smith, 2011). The increasing role of digital channels such as online travel communities (TripAdvisor, Booking.com), websites, and social media on consumer behavior has changed how businesses promote their services and interact with potential customers (Ziakis and Vlachopoulou, 2020). Tourism businesses benefit from the opportunities offered by digital tools and equipment in all marketing processes, from promotion activities to after-sales services (Kaya, 2021). Therefore, it can be said that digital marketing practices are strategically crucial for the tourism sector.

Bibliometric analysis is a type of scientific research method that feeds on the quantitative characteristics of academic studies (Seglen and Akness, 2000). This method, which deals with the studies conducted in a certain period with the census breakdown technique, enables new studies to reach qualified data (Irene, 2000). When this method is used correctly, both the studies carried out in the past can be analyzed correctly and can serve as a source for future studies (Çatı and Öcel, 2018).

Turkey is one of the most important tourism destinations in the world thanks to its rich history, natural beauty, climate, and geographical location (Akyol, 2022). The fact that digital

marketing offers the opportunity to offer personalized products to target audiences and measure marketing actions has made the subject popular both in academic studies and the sector (Top, 2022). On the other hand, thesis studies prepared at the postgraduate level constitute a resource for researchers in the same or different disciplines with the rich literature and findings they provide. Therefore, conducting a bibliometric analysis of postgraduate theses on digital marketing in the tourism sector is vital for the Turkish economy. To fill this gap in the literature, this study aims to conduct a bibliometric analysis of postgraduate theses written on digital marketing in the tourism sector in Turkey. In this regard, the theses prepared on digital marketing in the tourism sector between 2016-2023 and published in the National Thesis Center constitute the scope of the study. It is thought that this study will guide future researchers in areas such as understanding the development of graduate-level studies between these variables, identifying trends, and selecting areas and methods that can be studied.

This article presents a unique approach to studying digital marketing in the tourism sector. It begins by reviewing existing literature on related topics. The research's objectives, the population under study, and the data collection tool are then detailed in the methodology section. The findings are subsequently evaluated against pre-determined criteria, and recommendations for future studies are provided.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Bibliometric Analysis

Bibliometric analysis analyses academic studies in a field using statistical methods (Pritchard, 1969). Bibliometric analyses allow researchers to obtain statistical data on aspects such as author, subject, keywords, and distribution of publications by year. Bibliometric analysis also highlights its ability to classify the data obtained (Bozkurt and Çetin, 2016). Researchers use this research method in many fields of social sciences, such as marketing, tourism, business and public relations, due to these qualities of bibliometric analysis.

1.2. Digital Marketing Activities in the Tourism Sector

Digital marketing has started to shape marketing processes in business conditions where everything is digitalized. Marketing efforts carried out in the tourism sector have also been affected by this change. Tourism has some characteristics, such as the intangibility of the product, the obligation to be consumed in the region where it is produced, and its production and consumption are human-based (Benur and Bramwell, 2015). The fact that tourism products are predominantly intangible makes it challenging to persuade consumers to buy them. On the other hand, digital marketing tools such as virtual and augmented reality, mobile applications, search engines, social media, and video play an essential role in overcoming these challenges. Accordingly, tourism businesses can deliver personalized products to their target audiences quickly and through the most appropriate marketing channels, thanks to digital marketing (Schindehutte et al., 2004). Businesses that use digital marketing effectively gain significant advantages in today's intense competitive conditions (Fatanti and Suyadnya, 2015; Aktan and Koçyiğit, 2016).

Digital marketing tools are recognized as the most widely used marketing techniques in the tourism sector (Jashi, 2013). Since the leading product in the tourism sector is a service consumed immediately (Kandampully, 2000), digital marketing channels that provide a sustainable communication environment between the tourism business and guests are essential. Using these channels, personalized offers and campaigns can be delivered to the target audience 24/7 (Çallı, 2021). Tourism businesses try to reach target audiences by sharing written and visual posts on their social media accounts (Babu, 2021). On the other hand, internet-based marketing channels such as Trip Advisor, Booking.com, Trivago, and Expedia.com, which are used effectively worldwide, operate for tourism businesses (Güleryüz, 2019). These platforms, where businesses introduce their product content to consumers, are frequently used by tourists who tend to take holidays (Hvass and Munar, 2012). These digital marketing channels that bring consumers and hotels together on the Internet offer different opportunities to consumers (Khan et al., 2020). Consumers can simultaneously view many hotels suitable for their budget for the holiday they need. Then, they can choose the most suitable alternative by comparing price and quality (Armstrong, 2008).

In recent years, the bibliometric analysis method has been frequently used in academic studies on tourism and marketing worldwide (Özel and Kozak, 2012). To date, there have been many studies in which bibliometric analyses have been examined using bibliometric analyses in research on different types of marketing and tourism (Bozok, Kılıç and Özdemir, 2017; Çatı and Öcel, 2018; Tayfun, Ülker, Gökçe, Tengilimoğlu, Sürücü and Durmaz, 2018; Çelik and Canoğlu, 2019; Yeksan and Akbaba, 2019; Zeren and Kaya, 2020; Erkan, 2020; Boyraz, Kabakulak and Mutlu, 20; Eryaşar and Gönüllüoğlu, 2021; Özsaatçı, 2022; Güneş, Gündoğdu and Aksu, 2022; Akyol and Çalık, 2022).

Depending on the development of tourism in the academic world, the number of bibliometric studies has increased in our country since the 1990s. In this context, academic studies in which tourism and marketing are studied together (tourism marketing) have also been analyzed by the bibliometric method (Ekşi, Cesur and Güven, 2022; Gürdin, 2022; Adıgüzel, Eren and Hassan, 2017; İnce, Gül and Bozyiğit, 2017; Türktarhan, 2013; Özel and Kozak, 2012; Kozak, 2001).

Although digital marketing in Turkey has been studied a lot recently, only two studies were found where bibliometric analyses of the studies on this subject were conducted. Erkan (2020), "Past, Present, and Future of Digital Marketing: A Bibliometric Analysis," analyzed 1054 studies scanned in the Scopus database between 1982 and 2020 and containing the term "digital marketing.". The study results showed that the interest in digital marketing has started to increase since 2004, and the top three countries with the most studies in the field are the USA, India, and the United Kingdom, respectively. In addition, the most cited authors and studies in digital marketing, the journals with the most published articles, and the countries with the most frequent collaborations were determined. Another study was conducted by Zeren and Kaya (2020) titled "Digital Marketing: Bibliometric Analysis of National Literature". They scanned the TR Index and YÖKTEZ and examined 334 studies in which digital marketing concepts were mentioned. The authors determined a significant increase in the studies on digital marketing

after 2003 and the most commonly used digital marketing methods. In addition, the most commonly used research methods, data collection methods, data analysis methods, sample size, publication performance of journals, thesis publishing performance of universities and the change in keywords according to years were also discussed.

On the other hand, there are a few studies in the international literature in which academic studies on tourism and digital marketing are analyzed using the bibliometric method. Madzic et al. (2023) analyzed 3,683 studies that were cited in the "Web of Science and Scopus" databases and concluded that interest in the subject increased. They also identified the main topics and trends in the literature, such as the impact of digital technologies on customer experience, marketing and distribution, and business models in the tourism industry. Roziqin et al. (2023), "Trends in Digital Tourism: A Bibliometric Analysis", analyzed 102 studies scanned in the "Web of Science" database between 2001 and 2021. The results revealed that the country with the most studies on the subject was China, the university was Edinburg Napier University, and the authors who conducted research were Benyon, D., and Miao, F. Kalia et al. (2022). They analyzed 827 studies with the bibliometric analysis method to determine the direction in which digital tourism trends have evolved in the last 30 years. The findings revealed that the management of smart destinations, the internet as a marketing channel, technology and sustainability, and consumer behavior are emerging research directions in digital tourism. In addition, it was found that China, Spain, and the USA had the most studies on the subject. The authors were Dimitrios Buhalis, Namho Chung, Rob Law, and Chulmo Koo, and the researchers cited were Buhalis and Law.

Based on these studies, digital marketing in the tourism sector is an important subject. However, the fact that postgraduate thesis studies on this subject have not yet been evaluated using bibliometric analysis makes this study unique.

2. METHOD

This study aims to evaluate the postgraduate literature on digital marketing in the tourism sector in Turkey by using the bibliometric analysis method. Bibliometrics contributes to the literature in many ways, such as identifying reliable sources in any field, evaluating current changes and developments in science, creating an academic basis and evaluating academic results (Martinez et al. 2015, p. 257). In the selection of the years determined in the study, "(Bozok, Kılıç and Özdemir, 2017; Balyalı and İlhan, 2023; Boyraz, Kabakulak and Mutlu, 2020)" bibliometric analysis studies have been accepted as references. In the process of determining the year range in these studies, the starting year of the studies that were made available on YÖKTEZ was the determining factor. Digital marketing activities in the tourism sector are considered to be a very current issue. The same situation is reflected in the theses on this subject. The fact that the subject is up-to-date and that academic studies have been intensifying in recent years has also played an important role in determining the years of this study. In this context, in this study, in which the graduate theses written on digital marketing in the tourism sector between 2016-2023 were examined, bibliometric features were planned on the following basic parameters;

Distribution of theses according to years

Distribution of theses according to main variables (Hotel Businesses / Travel Agencies)

Distribution of theses according to keywords

Distribution of theses by type (Master's / Doctorate)

Distribution of theses according to research technique (Qualitative / Quantitative)

While creating the framework of these parameters, the terms "Digital Marketing, Digitalisation, and Tourism" were determined as keywords in the study. The YÖKTEZ database was used as a data collection source. In the research conducted with keywords, 16 thesis studies accessed through YÖKTEZ were included in the study. The data obtained were analyzed in the context of the basic features of the bibliometric analysis method.

3. FINDINGS

This section analyses the findings of national thesis studies on digital marketing in the tourism sector. As a result of the bibliometric analysis of 16 thesis studies accessed under the title of "Digital Marketing in Tourism Sector", the following basic findings were reached;

Table 1: List of Graduate Thesis Studies Accessed via YÖKTEZ

Sequence No	Author's Name	Thesis Name	Thesis Year	Type of Thesis	Application Area
1	Nihan ÖZTEL	Digital Marketing in Thermal Tourism: Research on Thermal Hotels	2023	Master's Degree	Tourism
2	Sergey ZUIKIN	Strategic Development of a Brand in a 5-Star Hotel with Digitalisation and Social Media Usage	2023	Master's Degree	Tourism
3	Dilek KARTAL	Attitude of the Staff towards the Digitalisation Process in Public Guesthouses: The Case of Western Mediterranean Region	2023	Master's Degree	Tourism
4	Ümit Yaşar ATALAY	Digital Marketing and Brand Equity Relationship in the Service Sector: A Research on the Hospitality Sector	2022	Master's Degree	Tourism
5	Ramazan İPEK	The Place and Importance of Digital Marketing Methods in Tourism Businesses	2022	Master's Degree	Tourism
6	Mustafa TOP	Evaluation of the Effect of Digital Marketing Activities on Sales Performance in the Tourism Sector: The Case of Düzce Province Hotel Enterprises	2022	Master's Degree	Tourism
7	Mira BAŞARAN	The Effect of Service Quality, Price and Digital Marketing Activities on Ticket Purchase Decisions of Passengers Travelling Between Germany and Turkey	2022	Master's Degree	Tourism

8	Gamze BİÇER	Digitalization in Travel Agencies: The Case of Istanbul	2022	Master's Degree	Tourism
9	Sayyeda ZONAH	Digitalization of Heritage Tourism: A Look at European Museums	2022	Master's Degree	Tourism
10	Ayday Shakir KIZI	Suitability Parameters of Websites in Terms of Digital Marketing: An Application on Accommodation Organisations	2021	Master's Degree	Tourism
11	Aybike Gökçe GÜDÜK	The Effect of Digital Marketing on Consumer Purchasing Behaviour: An Application for Hospitality Consumers	2021	Master's Degree	Tourism
12	Öykü DEMİR	Professional Tourist Guides' Perspective on Digitalisation and Robotisation in Tourism	2021	Master's Degree	Tourism
13	Bahar TÜRKAY	The Role of Smart Technologies in Digitalisation of Tourism Enterprises and Consumer Behaviour	2021	PhD	Tourism
14	Yakup ERDOĞAN	Sales Effect of Digital Marketing in Small and Medium-Sized Accommodation Businesses Operating in Cappadocia	2020	Master's Degree	Tourism
15	Melis GIDER	The Effects of Digitalisation Process on Tourism Sector within the Scope of Tourism Marketing: A Qualitative Research	2020	Master's Degree	Tourism
16	Yunus YETKİN	Digitalization in Hospitality Businesses and the Relationship between Digitalisation and Sustainable Tourism	2019	Master's Degree	Tourism

Table 1 provides information about the theses written between 2016 and 2023, which were obtained by searching "Digital Marketing, Digitalisation and Tourism" through YÖKTEZ. Tables 2, 3, 4, and 6 will be used to conduct detailed analyses of this information.

Table 2: Distribution of Postgraduate Theses by Years

Sequence	Year of Operation	Number of Studies
1	2016	0
2	2017	0
3	2018	0
4	2019	1
5	2020	2
6	2021	4
7	2022	6
8	2023	3

Table 2 shows the distribution of postgraduate theses on digital marketing in the tourism sector according to years. It was concluded that no thesis on digital marketing was written between 2016 and 2019, interest in the subject increased in the following years. Looking at the distribution, it was determined that the first study on digital marketing in the literature was a postgraduate thesis study in 2019. This predicament can be explained by the relative newness of digital marketing in national literature. In addition, with six postgraduate thesis studies, it was observed that the most interest in the subject occurred in 2022. Based on this information, it can be said that the interest in academic studies on digital marketing in the tourism sector has increased rapidly in recent years.

Table 3: Distribution of Postgraduate Theses According to Main Variables

Sequence	Variables	Number of Studies
1	Hotel Management	9
2	Travel Agencies	3
3	Employee Attitude	1
4	Consumer Behaviour	2
5	Tourism Marketing	1

In Table 3, some variables of the 16 postgraduate theses examined in the context of the study and their distribution according to these variables are given. It was determined that the theses carried out in the specified years generally focused on hotel businesses, which are the most basic building blocks of the tourism sector (nine theses). It was observed that three theses were conducted on travel agencies, which are essential stakeholders of the tourism sector. In addition, topics such as consumer behaviors, tourism marketing and employee attitudes were also addressed in the studies.

Table 4: Distribution of Postgraduate Theses According to Keywords

Sequence	Keywords	Number of Studies
1	Accommodation Organisations	1
2	Digital Marketing	9
3	Website	1
4	Consumer Behaviour	1
5	Purchasing	1
6	Service Quality	1
7	Price	1
8	Purchase Decision	1

9	Thermal Hotel	1
10	Internet	1
11	Advertisement	1
12	Digitalisation in Tourism	2
13	Smart Technologies	1
14	Mobile Technologies	1
15	Digitalisation	7
16	Travel Agencies	1
17	Digital Innovations	1
18	Digital Tourism	1
19	Tourism Marketing	1
20	Robotization	1
21	Smart Cities	1
22	E-tourism	1
23	Artificial Intelligence	1
24	Social media	1
25	Digital channels	1

Table 4 lists the keywords used in the postgraduate theses accessed through YÖKTEZ. It has been determined that the prominent keywords in the studies are "digital marketing", used nine times, and "digitalization", used seven times. Based on the keywords, it was understood that the digitalization process of hotel businesses was mainly addressed in the studies. In addition, 25 different words were used as keywords in the studies. Out of these words, 22 were used only once, with "digitalization in tourism" being used twice.

Table 5: Distribution of Graduate Theses by Type

Sequence	Type of Studies	Number of Studies
1	Master Thesis	15
2	Doctoral Thesis	1

The data obtained according to the type of thesis is listed in Table 5. It was determined that almost all postgraduate theses on digital marketing in tourism are written as master's theses. As stated in the table, only one doctoral thesis was written, although 15 master's theses were written. The reason behind this situation could be the higher number of master's theses

compared to doctoral theses in Turkey, and the insufficient development of national literature for comprehensive doctoral studies.

Table 6: Distribution of Postgraduate Theses According to Research Technique

Sequence	Type of Research	Data Collection Method	Number of Studies
1	Quantitative	Survey	5
2	Qualitative	Interview	8
		Observation	2
		Content Analysis	5

Quantitative research techniques focus on numerical data, expressing their outputs numerically. Qualitative data are primarily preferred in the field of social sciences. The limitation of numerical outputs is the main feature of qualitative data. The questionnaire is the most widely preferred data collection method in quantitative research techniques. Interview, observation and content analysis are data collection techniques frequently used in qualitative research techniques. Qualitative data collection techniques can be used in multiple ways. In other words, although the interview technique is preferred, observation and content analysis methods can be used simultaneously.

In this context, the findings regarding the research methods and data collection techniques of postgraduate theses written between 2016 and 2019 on digital marketing practices in the tourism sector are presented in Table six above. The findings reveal that qualitative research techniques were preferred in 11 of the 16 theses on digital marketing. In eight of the 11 studies, the interview technique was used. Out of these studies, content analysis techniques were used in five and observation techniques in two. In addition, quantitative research techniques were preferred in five of these thesis studies. A questionnaire was preferred as a data collection method for all of these. In summary, qualitative research techniques and interview techniques as data collection techniques are primarily preferred in thesis studies on digital marketing activities in the tourism sector.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aims to evaluate the postgraduate theses written on digital marketing in the tourism sector between 2016-2023 in the national literature by using the bibliometric analysis method. Within the scope of the research, 16 thesis studies accessed from the YÖKTEZ database between 2016-2023 were analyzed. In this way, it is aimed to provide detailed information about the thesis studies prepared for digital marketing applications in the tourism sector and to present the trends emerging over the years to researchers. As a result of the bibliometric analyses, it was determined that the first thesis on digital marketing in the tourism sector was a master's thesis in 2019. Since this date, it has been observed that the interest in digital marketing in the tourism sector has increased, as reflected in the number of thesis studies. This

increase reached the highest number, with six thesis studies in 2022 annually. A total of 16 thesis studies were prepared between 2019-2023.

The qualitative research method was mainly preferred in the thesis studies. In qualitative research, the interview technique was generally preferred as a data collection tool. This may be related to the difficulty of collecting accurate data using quantitative methods and the researchers' desire to collect in-depth information. It was determined that hotel establishments in the tourism sector were selected as the field of application. The high number of hotels in Turkey and hotel employees and customers may make it easier for researchers to collect data. As a result of evaluating the keywords of the studies, it was observed that the words "digitalization, digitalization in tourism, digital marketing" came to the fore. This result was previously reported by Zeren and Kaya (2020) in "Digital Marketing: Bibliometric Analysis of National Literature" by Zeren and Kaya (2020). Almost all of the thesis studies related to the research topic are master's theses, which may be related to the fact that the digital marketing literature has not yet developed sufficiently in the tourism sector as of this period. In the theses prepared between the years specified in the study, the "Hotel Enterprises" variable was determined as the most decisive variable used nine times. These studies increase the awareness of digital marketing in the tourism literature, serve as a source for new studies, and raise awareness of the subject. From this point of view, digital marketing studies for the tourism sector will gain momentum.

An important limitation of this study is that postgraduate theses are limited to digital marketing applications in tourism. In addition, the fact that bibliometric analysis of postgraduate theses has yet to be conducted on this subject did not make it possible to compare the study's findings with the previous literature. Further bibliometric studies, including postgraduate thesis studies on all types of marketing in the field of tourism, may provide more findings. Moreover, including scientific articles on digital marketing applications with tourism as the field of application within the scope of the study will reveal in-depth findings. In future studies, bibliometric studies on digital marketing practices can be compared with marketing practices other than digital marketing with tourism as an application area.

Similarly, bibliometric analysis of scientific articles on digital marketing practices in tourism can be conducted. Bibliometric analysis of digital marketing practices in gastronomy, a sub-component of tourism that has become a rising trend in recent years, can also significantly contribute to the national literature. In addition, bibliometric evaluation of articles on areas such as "travel agencies, entertainment services, and accommodation services" which are important tourism sector stakeholders, will contribute to the literature. On the other hand, the renewal of a similar study in the future may allow both the number of studies to be evaluated and the comparison of the findings obtained in terms of periods.

Madzic et al. (2023) revealed the importance of digitalization in the tourism sector with the bibliometric analysis method in their study titled "Digital Transformation in Tourism: Bibliometric Literature Review Based on Machine Learning Approach". Similarly, Boyraz, Kabakulak and Mutlu (2020) added value to the literature in the context of general tourism with their study titled "Bibliometric Analysis of Graduate Theses on Tourism with Data Visualization

Technique: The Case of 2006-2020 Years". Bozok, Kılıç and Özdemir (2017) bibliometrically examined the studies carried out for rural tourism. In addition to these studies that deal with the tourism sector in different dimensions during the literature review process, it has been determined that the studies on "digital marketing in the tourism sector" are limited. Nowadays, digital marketing is quite important in the tourism sector as all business lines. This bibliometric analysis study is thought to contribute to the literature in this respect. The obtained numerical data show that digital marketing in tourism is a very current issue and there is a need for many more thesis studies in this field. For this reason, it is possible to say that it would be academically valuable to direct possible studies to this subject.

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