THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY

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Based on empirical studies in South Africa

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Abstract

This study evaluates local tourism in Iran, focusing on domestic travel. The initial analysis explores the broader role In our study we provide a literature review on the relationship between employee engagement and effectiveness, exploring recent human resource trends. We briefly introduce HR trends for the 21st century, such as sustainable and green corporate goals and leadership. We compare large South African companies such as Vodacom, Standard Bank, and Sibanye still Waters with world-renowned multinationals such as Unilever, Johnson & Johnson, and Samsung to identify and illustrate the parallelism of trends and similarities while pointing out local specificities that guarantee local success. The method chosen is not a retrospective exploration but a presentation of the most recent literature. Our aim was to project the engagement and productivity of South African employees.

Keywords: human resources, green human resource management, employees, green practices, sustainability

Introduction

Human Resources Management (HRM) has evolved from a simple administrative role to a strategic partner in organizational success (Shahreki ,2019). Understanding the link between em-ployee engagement and productivity has become crucial in developing modern HRM paradigms in this changing environment. According to Boxall & Macky (2018) the evolving paradigms in HRM represent a shift from traditional approaches, shifting the focus from viewing employ-ees as mere assets to seeing them as valuable assets critical to an organization's success. Shahreki (2019) considers that employee engagement, defined as employees' emotional commitment and connection to their work and organization, is critical to this transition. Similarly, productivity, which measures labour is a measure of economic performance that compares the (output) with the number of inputs used to produce those goods and services.

Recent studies continue to prove a strong link between employee engagement and produc-tivity. Employees who are engaged in their work show greater elation, devotion, and emotional engagement in their work Vela & Sinaj (2023). Employees tend to concentrate their efforts on conducting individual and collective goals when they feel valued, recognized, and aligned with the organization's goals (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). This greater devotion translates into higher work performance, increased efficiency, and conceptual contributions, all of which contribute to increased productivity.

HRM paradigm shifts have motivated organizations to recognize employee engagement as a strategic plan for influencing productivity and organizational performance (Alfes et al., 2022). As a result, HR professionals have embraced novel strategies aimed at increasing workforce en-gagement and productivity (Da Silva et al., 2022). These strategies often centre on fostering in-clusive workplace environments that value diversity and allow people to make meaningful con-tributions.

Yasin et al. (2023) state that HRM's conventional role has shifted drastically, repre-senting a move from an administrative function to a partner of strategic importance in the organization. Mustafa et al. (2022) explain that Green Human Resources Management (Green HRM) is a paradigm that integrates environmental issues into HRM practices to build sustainable and environmentally responsible organizations. According to Alshaabani et al. (2021) employee engagement, a critical part of GHRM, is influenced by the organization's commitment to sustainability, engaging employees in green initiatives such as recycling initiatives and energy-saving measures can have a significant impact on their motivation and dedication. Vázquez-Brust et al. (2022) state that when employees feel involved in environmentally friendly practices, they are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of engagement, positively contributing to the organization's sustainability goals.

Trends in Human Resources Management

Trends in Human resources management focus on elements such as employee recognition and appreciation, development of a positive workplace culture, work-life balance, and building trust and leadership support:

Employee recognition: Employees' efforts and achievements promotes morale while also increasing overall productivity and job satisfaction (Buckley et al., 2023). It promotes a healthy work culture in which employees feel valued and driven, resulting in lower turnover rates and higher employee engagement (Khademi-Bujdosó, 2020). Furthermore, a well-structured recognition program may be an effective tool for attracting top personnel and differentiating an organization as an employer of choice (Bryd & Scott, 2024).

Development of a Positive Workplace Culture: a study by Shrader et al. (2022) emphasizes the need to build a positive work environment. A culture of trust, collaboration, and inclusion, which encourages employee engagement, and productivity and develops a sense of purpose.

Work-Life Balance: In recent years, organizations have emphasized work-life balance. The emphasis being on flexible work arrangements, remote work choices, and policies that allow employees to disconnect from work during non-working hours, fostering increased engagement and lowering burnout (Abdelhay et al., 2023).

Sustainable leadership: Sustainable leadership refers to a new and enlarged concept of leadership that is based on sustainability principles, sustainable leadership practices, and building an inclusive, cooperative, and responsive leadership approach. The purpose of sustainable leadership is to situate sustainability within the context of leadership and clarify the idea of sustainable leadership based on sustainability (Abdelhay et al., 2023).

Building Trust and Leadership Support: Leadership trust is essential for employee engagement because it leads to staff productivity. The emphasis is on proving trustworthy leadership and assisting managers in effectively engaging and motivating employees (Shafaei & Nejati, 2023).

Synthesis on Trends in Human Resources Management

Human Resources Management (HRM) is important in shaping organizational dynamics and employee engagement. Several significant trends in HRM have evolved, significantly influencing how organizations manage and nurture their employees.

Employee recognition and appreciation are critical components of human resource management techniques, organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of rewarding employee achievements, and organizations develop a culture that values and appreciates its workers by adopting recognition programs, celebrating milestones, and expressing gratitude for employee efforts. Such programs not only raise morale but also increase staff involvement and dedication.

Furthermore, the creation of a positive workplace culture is a cornerstone of HRM trends. Employees feel valued and supported in a workplace characterized by trust, open communication, inclusivity, and a shared sense of purpose. When human resources develop a healthy culture, it improves job satisfaction, encourages collaboration, and promotes innovation. Employees thrive in these situations, which leads to enhanced productivity, higher retention rates, and improved organizational success.

Work-life balance has appeared as an important focus in modern HRM strategies. Organizations are beginning to recognize the value of allowing people to balance their working and personal lives. HRM enhances employee well-being and productivity by supplying flexible work arrangements, and remote work choices, and encouraging employees to unplug from work during non-working hours. Building trust and leadership support is a vital part of good human resource management. Employees have confidence and loyalty when their leaders are trustworthy. HRM emphasizes developing leaders that are open, sympathetic, and supportive. Employee engagement is increased when leaders build a trusting environment, supply advice, recognize employee potential, and empower their teams. This HRM trends employee recognition, good workplace culture, work-life balance, and trustworthy leadership play a role in creating a work environment that promotes better levels of employee engagement, contentment, and productivity.

Trends in Green Human Resources Management (GHRM)

Below is an elaboration on the trends in Human Resources Management focusing on the following elements (Lu et al., 2023):

Green Leadership Development: green leadership development places a strong emphasis on producing environmentally conscientious leaders, Organizations investing in sustainability-focused leadership development cultivate leaders that advocate for green practices where leaders demonstrate a commitment to sustainability, they impact employee engagement by setting an example and building an atmosphere in which environmental issues are prioritized (Cui et al., 2023).

Green Goals in Performance Metrics: GHRM incorporates green performance indicators into employee evaluations, and employees become more engaged as they recognize their part in reaching environmental goals, this stimulates employees to take part in environmentally friendly activities (Lu et al., 2023).

Sustainable Leadership: A new and enlarged concept of leadership that is based on sustainability principles, sustainable leadership practices, and building an inclusive, cooperative, and responsive leadership approach. The purpose of sustainable leadership is to situate sustainability within the context of leadership and clarify the idea of sustainable leadership based on sustainability (Cuhadar & Rudnák, 2022).

Sustainable Employee Engagement Programs: Organizations introducing engagement efforts aimed at ensuring long-term success, employee involvement in eco-friendly activities, sustainability projects, and volunteer programs relating to environmental factors are emphasized by GHRM. These programs instill a sense of purpose and pride in employees, which has a direct impact on their levels of engagement (Tran.N ,2023).

Synthesis on Trends in Green Human Resources Management

Several GHRM trends such as the incorporation of green goals into performance metrics, green leadership development, and sustainable employee engagement programs, have appeared as critical components in fostering a more engaged and environmentally conscious workforce.

Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) is hugely influenced by an organization's commitment to sustainability. Engaging employees in green efforts, including recycling programs and energy-saving measures, can have a significant impact on their motivation and dedication. Employees who feel linked to and valued for their contributions to these efforts tend to display more devotion, playing a critical role in the organization's pursuit of sustainability goals. Thus, including environmentally conscious activities in HRM strategies not only increases employee engagement but also confirms the organization's commitment to sustainable practices.

The use of green indicators of performance in employee assessments is an important aspect of GHRM practices. Employees recognize their involvement in reaching environmental goals by linking individual or team goals with sustainability goals. When sustainability is incorporated into performance evaluations, it becomes a critical motivator, motivating employees to actively take part in ecologically beneficial activities. This incorporation of green goals not only promotes awareness but also instils a sense of accountability among employees, resulting in increased engagement as they strive towards common environmental goals.

Furthermore, GHRM lays a strong emphasis on developing environmentally conscious leaders. Leaders who prove a strong commitment to sustainability function as role models, encouraging staff engagement by setting a precedent and creating an environment in which environmental concerns are prioritized. A study by Albrecht et al. (2021) discusses the impact of environmentally conscious leaders it emphasizes that it is felt throughout the organization, encouraging staff to connect their beliefs with the organization's environmental goals, thereby increasing engagement and dedication. Furthermore, long-term employee engagement programs are a key part of GHRM projects, employees are actively involved in sustainability projects and volunteer programs.

Finally, the incorporation of green goals into performance measurements, green leadership development, and long-term employee engagement programs shows the progression of GHRM approaches aimed at increasing employee engagement. Farooq et al. (2021) state that these projects not only raise environmental awareness but also encourage employees to get involved in sustainability efforts, resulting in a workforce that is not only engaged but also aligned with the organization's environmental goals. As GHRM evolves, promoting an environmentally conscious culture becomes increasingly important in generating employee engagement and organizational success.

Material and Methodology

This study conducted a comparative case study analysis of The Relationship Between Employee Engagement and Productivity, to get an understanding of employee engagement and productivity by conducting case studies comparing South African companies with multinational companies to investigate the factors involved in employee engagement and productivity. The search found relevant sources using keywords such as "Human resources," "Green Human Resources Management," "employees," "Green practices" and "sustainability." On databases that are Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar.

The inclusion criteria of the case study analysis focused on trends in Human Resources and Green Human Resources Management. The screening of articles involved reviewing titles, abstracts, and analysing case studies. A synthesis and analysis of the extracted case studies characterized it thematically, highlighting. commonalities between the different companies selected and to retrieve the best practices. This method ensured a structured review, offering insights into the relationship between employee engagement and productivity.

Results

Unilever

Unilever plc is a British multinational fast-moving consumer goods company founded on 2 September 1929. Raj (2023) elaborates on the Unilever case study to prove green human resources management practices:

Ensuring diversity and inclusion: Within the year 2030, Unilever has set a target to ensure a 50:50 gender balance, the organization is trying to ensure the representation of various minority groups, including employees with disability within the organization, it has also ensured a flexible working culture based on the region in which it is operating (Raj, 2023).

Ensuring Employees' Good Health and Well-Being: Raj (2023) states that Unilever has devised mental health programs for its employees, to assist with mental health support and physical health. the organization has global health and well-being. The organization's main purpose is to ensure a safe working place, perform pre-employment and annual medical examinations, and ensure the fitness of the employees. From 2014 to 2021, occupation-related illness frequency globally has decreased from 0.54 to 0.3.

Ensuring Engagement with Diverse Stakeholders: The organization has taken the initiative to learn about the views of this vast pool of human resources through its UniVoice survey program. in 2021, around 90,000 people took part in the survey to share their views about Unilever's practices. To ensure engagement with customers, the organization set up thirty-seven in-house data centre is that collect and store data from its interaction with customers. In this process, carelines and digital marketing tools were used to acquire information, the sole purpose was to address the expectations of the customers by storing their complaints (Raj, 2023).

Ensuring Well-being: Raj (2023) elaborates that through Lifebuoy's campaign, the organization has been able to develop good handwashing habits among one billion people highlighting the importance of handwashing. The organization has reached around 486 million people in thirty countries and has deployed campaigns with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and relevant government departments to achieve this result. The organization has developed a handwashing digital game for kids, which has shown positive results in terms of developing a good handwashing practice, the organization has installed around 500,000 hand washing stations and trained around 140,000 health workers regarding hygiene practices, further, it has partnered with Sight savers and reached around half a million people by teaching them hygiene practices, and this was done in schools in countries such as Ethiopia, Zambia, and Kenya, this resulted in positive hygiene practices.

Samsung

Samsung is a South Korean multinational major appliance and consumer electronics company. Jeong & Park (2023) detail the Samsung case study focusing on talent development, green leadership development, and sustainability in human resources policies below:

Talent Development: Samsung wants its employees to grow by operating their programs to nurture creative and challenge-seeking talent to strengthen leadership and professionalism, by conducting systematic leadership diagnoses for employees in leadership positions every year and supporting leadership training based on the diagnosis results (Jeong & Park, 2023).

Green Leadership Development: Jeong & Park (2023) state that green leadership is providing managers with specialized training or workshops in incorporating sustainability into decision-making processes. Environmentally conscientious managers who support sustainability projects within their teams can have a substantial impact on the organization's overall sustainability efforts.

Sustainability in Human Resources Policies: Incorporating sustainability considerations into HR policies and practices, such as providing eco-friendly employee rewards, advocating a sustainable procurement policy, and motivating employees to adopt sustainable behaviour's (Jeong & Park, 2023).

Johnson & Johnson

Johnson & Johnson is an American multinational, pharmaceutical, and medical technologies company. Aljabhan (2022) states that the organization is committed to supporting employee development through an integrated approach to professional progress. The Personalised Development Framework is key to this strategy, guaranteeing that each employee may reach their full potential inside the organization, this structure is built on three pillars the three Es: education, experience, and exposure.

Education: Leadership training, skill-building workshops, eLearning opportunities, access to online resources, and participation in external seminars or Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are all part of the company's education activities. This emphasizes constant learning that provides employees with the necessary abilities for success (Aljabhan, 2022).

Experience: The organization encourages employees to take on a variety of projects, assignments, and tasks to improve their skill proficiency and prepare for future roles. Aljabhan (2022) states that this first-hand approach includes special projects, stretch assignments, expanded role responsibilities, international assignments, and community volunteering, all of which foster growth and readiness for a variety of career paths.

Exposure: Exposure emphasizes purposeful interaction among employees to boost visibility and provide a comprehensive image of the organization. Encouraging relationships between departments and external entities allows employees to learn insights outside of their direct roles, which contributes to their overall development (Aljabhan, 2022).

Through this comprehensive approach to professional development, the organization creates an environment that prioritizes continuous learning, diverse experiences, and intentional exposure. This commitment to employee growth and engagement creates a workforce that is adaptable, skilled, and well-prepared to excel in their careers within the organization.

The Standard Bank Group

Standard Bank is a prominent financial institution headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa. It operates across multiple African countries and some international markets, offering a wide range of financial services, including personal and commercial banking, investment banking, wealth management, and insurance. It has been on to foster an environment where employees can show up as themselves be fully engaged, feel like they belong, and bring their authentic selves to work. the organization uses a human-centred approach (Nawrat, 2023).

Listening to its employees: Nawrat (2023) details finding new ways to support its employees with what they need to thrive and to reach their goals this involves truly listening to employees to understand what inspires them, and what they aspire to, both personally and professionally.

The human-centred approach stood the organization in good stead during the COVID-19 pandemic and helped with the transition to working from home while still prioritizing the employee's well-being during that time. One of the major outcomes of this work in the post-pandemic hybrid era has been that employees feel more comfortable being vulnerable and more human (Nawrat, 2023).

Open engagement: A key focus for the organization on this journey has been to deliberately create opportunities and environments where it is safe for employees to speak up and share their views. this has resulted in a positive shift within the organization. Employees feel more comfortable opening outside structured forums, this is key for the wellbeing of the employees, and the organization (Nawrat, 2023).

Vodacom

Vodacom, a subsidiary of the Vodafone Group is a telecommunications company It was founded in 1994 with its headquarters in Johannesburg, South Africa. Over the years, it has expanded its operations across the African continent, becoming one of the leading mobile communications companies in Africa. According to Howell et al. (2022) The Vodacom Employee Engage App simplifies employee engagement through a user-friendly interface, which is easy to navigate. Through the app, employees log in to the platform from their smartphones, to:

- View payslips and benefits
- Access the network operator's learning platform.
- Manage and review performance.
- Connect to Workplace
- Keep up to date with the news.
- Log health and safety, as well as maintenance calls.
- book boardrooms and view calendars.
- Access their digital signature.
- Access key Vodacom policies and procedures

The rollout of the app forms part of the organization's phase one rollout of internal digital solutions. The organization is looking to enhance the app through app analytics and insights from its employees as it reached a 50% penetration of its staff base within 6 weeks of launch, the organization plans to enhance the platform by including smart parking, in-app messaging, and compliance and digital visitor (Howell et al., 2022).

Sibanye Still water

Sibanye Still Water is a gold mining and metals processing company with a diverse portfolio of mining and processing operations, projects, and investments headquartered in Johannesburg South Africa. Sibanye still water (2023) describes the human resources model used at Sibanye still water-swere designed to help achieve the organization's business strategy and promote an I CARES values-based organization namely, commitment, accountability, respect, enabling, and safety. Its employee engagement strategy includes leadership development and training programs, as well as executive development designed to develop a pool of effective and aligned leaders, encompassing coaching, leading for impact, strategy, transformation, and stakeholder engagement. Sibanye Still Water (2023) further states that it aims to equip employees with the skills and resources necessary to enable them to perform at their peak. Sibanye Still Water (2023) emphasizes that the organization takes an integrated and comprehensive approach to talent management employees are provided with technical, safety, skills training, and development programs that enhance safe working practices, nurture talent, and provide opportunities for professional development.

Sibanye Still Water (2023) highlights the career growth model and career paths embedded in the philosophy are career development aimed at developing a career through skills training, lateral critical experiences, moving to higher job responsibilities, and cross-functional positions within the same organization to meet the target, the organization is committed to supporting employee career paths and identifying and nurturing talent.

Discussion

Diversity & Inclusion: Unilever, a British global corporation, has set enormous diversity goals, aiming for a 50:50 gender split by 2030 and actively boosting the presence of numerous minority groups, including employees with impairments. Similarly, the Standard Bank Group takes a human-centered approach, emphasizing the significance of listening to employees, understanding their goals, and supplying conditions that allow people to be themselves at work. This technique has grown even more important in the post-pandemic environment, as employees are more comfortable being vulnerable and real.

Employee well-being: Unilever uses mental health programs and global health efforts to provide a safe working environment, while Johnson & Johnson takes a more comprehensive approach, including leadership training, skill-building workshops, and a Personalized Development Framework. The Standard Bank Group actively supported its employees throughout the challenging period of the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrating a dedication to employee well-being as they transitioned to remote work.

Sustainability & Green Practices: Sustainability is a fundamental element in HR policies. Unilever practices sustainability by promoting handwashing and minimizing occupational diseases. Samsung focuses on green leadership development and includes sustainability into HR policy, whereas Vodacom innovates with digital solutions, such as the Employee Engage App, and plans updates based on analytics to improve sustainability. Sibanye-Stillwater integrates sustainability into personnel management, focusing on safety and environmental goals.

Talent development: Talent development is a top priority for firms looking to nurture and empower their employees. Samsung emphasizes talent development through programs, leadership assessments, and ongoing training. Johnson & Johnson's Personalized Development Framework combines education, experience, and exposure to foster an atmosphere that values lifelong learning and different encounters. The Standard Bank Group promotes a learning environment through open participation, actively assisting workers in reaching their full potential.

Technology and innovation: Human resource strategies demonstrate technological innovation, with organizations using digital technologies to improve employee engagement. Unilever engages stakeholders through digital channels such as data centres and digital marketing tools. Vodacom's Employee Engage App eases employee engagement by providing features such as access to learning platforms, performance management, and company news updates. These technological developments show a commitment to staying ahead in the digital age.

Value-Centric Approach: Sibanye-Stillwater distinguishes itself by its values-based approach to employee engagement, which emphasizes commitment, accountability, respect, empowerment, and safety. This values-driven strategy establishes a solid foundation for decision-making and professional conduct, connecting the workforce with the organization's guiding ideals.

The case studies of Unilever, Standard Bank Group, Johnson & Johnson, Samsung, Vodacom, and Sibanye-Stillwater offer significant insights into the various Human Resource Management methods and techniques. Despite operating in different industries and geographical regions, these organizations share numerous essential aspects that highlight the current dynamics of efficient HR management. A comparative review of these worldwide organizations reveals a rich tapestry of HR strategies that prioritize diversity, employee well-being, sustainability, talent development, technology, and values-based approaches. While each organization brings its strategy to the table, the unifying elements highlight a shared commitment to developing and prioritizing talent development within an inclusive, sustainable, and innovative workplace culture. These firms' depictions of evolving HR management trends reflect the dynamic nature of the global workforce, as well as continual efforts to adapt and excel in an ever-changing corporate environment.

Diversity and inclusion appear as critical factors for the mentioned companies. Unilever's goal to achieve a 50:50 gender balance by 2030, as well as representation of minority groups, are echoed by Standard Bank Group's human-centered strategy, demonstrating a common priority on developing diverse and inclusive workplaces. This inclusivity extends beyond demographics to establishing settings in where employees feel comfortable expressing their genuine selves, as demonstrated by Unilever and Standard Bank Group's respective agendas.

Employee well-being appears as a common goal, heightened by the challenges offered by the worldwide epidemic. Unilever and Johnson & Johnson take real steps to create mental health programs, whilst Standard Bank Group actively supports its personnel amid emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic, putting employee health and well-being first. Unilever's involvement in global health projects and Samsung's focus on green leadership development. Talent development develops as a common goal, with a commitment to lifelong learning, different experiences, and deliberate exposure. These organizations understand that investing in their employees' growth and development is critical for long-term success, whether through leadership training, personalized development frameworks, or new digital solutions like Vodacom's Employee Engage App. Technology and innovation play critical roles in these HR strategies, with a particular emphasis on digital solutions. From Unilever's usage of data centres to Vodacom's Employee Engage App, technology is being used to improve employee engagement, hasten procedures, and promote sustainability. In closing these case studies prove a comprehensive approach to human resource management in

which diversity, well-being, sustainability, talent development, and technology come together to create workplaces that are not only resilient in the face of challenges, but also adaptive and innovative in a rapidly changing global environment.

Conclusion

Human Resource Management (HRM) has seen abrupt shifts that have a substantial impact on how organizations manage their workforce and drive employee engagement and productivity. Employee recognition is crucial among these developments, Organizations that adopt recognition programs, commemorate milestones, and express gratitude for employees' accomplishments not only raise morale but also increase employee involvement and productivity. Furthermore, cultivating a positive workplace culture is a cornerstone of HRM trends. Organizations that prioritize trust, open communication, inclusion, and a shared sense of purpose foster an environment in which employees feel appreciated and supported. This supportive culture boosts job satisfaction, encourages collaboration, and ignites innovation.

Employees thrive in such environments, resulting in enhanced productivity, higher retention rates, and overall organizational success. Equally important is the development of trust and support in leadership, which is a necessary part of good human resource management. Employees place their trust in leaders who display honesty, empathy, and support. Human resource management strives to develop leaders who establish a trusting environment, provide advice, recognize employee potential, and empower their teams. Trust in leadership increases employee engagement, resulting in motivated and committed employees who contribute to organizational success. Green Human Resource Management (GHRM) is a strategic approach to incorporating sustainability into HR processes. Aligning HRM methods with environmental goals increases employee engagement and commitment. Clear communication, and education, a comprehensive approach includes incorporating green activities into HR regulations, encouraging employee participation, and fostering leadership role modeling. Measurement, reporting, and continuous improvement help organizations stay on track toward their sustainability goals, cementing the relationship between employee engagement and the pursuit of environmentally responsible activities.

Finally, the case studies of Unilever, Standard Bank Group, Johnson & Johnson, Samsung, Vodacom, and Sibanye-Stillwater provide valuable insights into different human resource management strategies and techniques. Despite operating in diverse industries and geographical regions, these businesses share many key characteristics that show the current state of efficient HR management. A comparative analysis of these global organizations reveals a complex tapestry of human resource strategies that prioritize diversity, employee well-being, sustainability, talent development, technology, and values-based approaches. While each organization brings its plan to the table, the common thread is a shared commitment to building and prioritizing talent development within an inclusive, sustainable, and innovative workplace culture.

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