

# Digital Political Communication Strategy on The Victory Bertaji Couple in Oku Pilkada 2024

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study aims to analyze the stage of political communication strategy of Teddy Meilwansya and Marjito Bachri (BERTAJI) couple in winning the Regional Head election contestation of Ogan Komering Ulu regency, South Sumatra province in 2024.

**Methodology:** This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to the method of content analysis (content analysis). The object of the study focused on the official Instagram account of the couple Teddy Meilwansya and Marjito Bachri (BERTAJI) and the contents uploaded during the Ogan Komering Ulu Regency Regional Head election campaign period in 2024.

**Results:** Tajik couples used Instagram to build a positive image, interact directly with young voters, and convey campaign messages in a consistent visual and narrative manner.

**Conclusions:** The success of the couple Teddy Meilwansya and Marjito Bachri (BERTAJI) in winning the Ogan Komering Ulu Regency regional election in 2024 was due to the adoption of digital political communication strategies, especially through Instagram, which effectively built a positive image and facilitated participatory communication with young voters.

**Limitations:** This study is limited to the analysis of the political communication strategy of the BERTAJI couple in the 2024 Ogan Komering Ulu Regency Election.

**Contributions:** This research contributes significantly by showing that success in local political contestation in the digital age depends heavily on adaptive communication strategies that blend conventional and digital approaches, especially the use of social media such as Instagram as the main instrument to build image, convey vision-mission, and interact directly with young voters.

**Keywords:** *Elections, Instagram, Political Communication Strategy*

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## 1. Introduction

Political communication strategies in regional elections in Indonesia are still largely dominated by conventional campaign approaches, such as face-to-face meetings, banner and billboard advertisements, and approaches through political parties or community leaders (Heryanto, 2018). This method is less effective in reaching voters widely and tends to deliver one-way communication (Al Hadar, Amaliatulwalidain, & Isabella, 2025). The use of social media and digital strategies is still rare in political campaigns, especially in regions outside major cities (Putri, Sudrajat, Gedeona, & Mursalim, 2025). This makes political campaigns less dynamic and less able to reach young voters, who mostly use digital media (Sutisna & SH, 2024).

Young voters actively monitor social media, particularly Instagram, which has become a primary means for collecting and disseminating political information (Farida, Rasda, & Mutmainna, 2023). In this

context, Instagram functions not only as a communication tool but also as a dynamic arena for political discussion among younger generations. They tend to actively follow the official accounts of regional head candidates and engage in interactions through comments and story features, which allows them to express their views and opinions directly. The involvement of young voters on Instagram creates a phenomenon in which public opinion can be formed and influenced by the content and narratives developed on the platform (Susetyawidianta & GERALDY, 2024). This engagement creates opportunities for candidates to design more effective communication strategies by utilizing visual content that is popular among young voters. By understanding the behavior and preferences of young voters on Instagram, regional head candidates can optimize their approaches to build a positive image and trust, which can ultimately contribute to their success in gaining voter support during regional elections (Lestari, Heriani, Munawar, & Putranto, 2025).



Figure 1. Vote Count for Candidate Pairs

Figure 1 show regional head election in Ogan Komering Ulu Regency, there were two candidate pairs registering to contest, namely: 1) Yudi Purna Nugraha and Yenny Elita, and 2) Teddy Meilwansya and Marjito Bachri. Based on the vote count for the regional head election in Ogan Komering Ulu Regency, the General Election Commission (KPU) determined that candidate pair number 2, Teddy Meilwansya and Marjito Bachri, received the highest number of votes at 50.9%, which was also uploaded through a local media Instagram account in collaboration with candidate pair number 2.

The pair Teddy Meilwansya and Marjito Bachri, known as *Bersama Teddy and Marjito* (BERTAJI), implemented a political communication strategy by utilizing social media as a campaign tool. Platforms such as Instagram were used to convey information and build a positive image of the BERTAJI program. This digital approach helped reach young voters, who form an important electoral base for the party. Therefore, BERTAJI demonstrated that political communication strategies can be conducted adaptively and effectively by leveraging digital technology, where the shift from conventional campaign approaches to digital approaches became a key focus for understanding how political communication is executed in the digital age.

Previous studies, such as those by Al Barra (2020); Maulana (2023); Risyad (2022), focused more on direct campaigning, image building, and the role of social capital and political networks in winning elections. Other studies, such as Pirzan, Anrial, and Konggoro (2024); Triwicaksono and Nugroho (2021) and examine political communication strategies at the village and city levels, emphasizing interpersonal relations and the role of community leaders. However, no study has specifically explored the political communication strategies of regional head candidates in utilizing social media and creative digital content to build a political image and win contests.

Thus, this research addresses this gap by examining Political Communication Strategies in Winning Regional Head Elections in Ogan Komering Ulu Regency, South Sumatra, in 2024. This study is

important because social media-based political communication strategies have become increasingly necessary in the dynamics of digital democracy. Academically, this study enriches the literature on political communication in regional head elections, particularly highlighting the integration of conventional and digital approaches. Practically, the findings can serve as a reference for campaign teams, politicians, and regional head candidates in designing strategies that are adaptive to technological developments and responsive to local voter characteristics in the future. Additionally, this study can encourage the improvement of democratic quality through more open, participatory, and educationally grounded communication strategies.

Through political communication built by candidates via media, dialogue, open, and written campaigns, they aim to gain power and expand their influence to obtain legitimate authority on behalf of the majority (votes acquired in the election) as a prerequisite for democracy (Yulianto, 2014). Advances in communication technology have permeated human life, one form of which is new media, which has subsequently given rise to social media. The presence of social media also impacts politics, where it has become an effective campaigning tool. Digital-based new media allows political information to become increasingly massive, rapidly distributed, and interactive (Hutabarat, 2024).

Although many studies have analyzed the effectiveness of digital political communication strategies in the context of national or larger regional elections and identified general trends in social media use by candidates, few studies have specifically and in depth explored how digital strategies are adapted and implemented to achieve victory in smaller-scale regional head elections. The main novelty of this study lies in its specific empirical focus, which has been less explored, namely, analyzing digital political communication strategies in the context of small-scale regency elections such as Ogan Komering Ulu. Unlike previous studies that generally focus on election dynamics in large cities or at the national level, this study makes a significant contribution by revealing the strategic adaptations undertaken by BERTAJI to overcome the limitations of digital infrastructure and local audience heterogeneity. This study will produce a contextual digital communication model relevant to regions with similar socio-demographic and geographic characteristics, offering new insights into the effectiveness of integrating online and offline campaigns in non-metropolitan areas, thereby enriching the field of political communication in Indonesia.

The primary objective of this study is to analyze and provide an in-depth description of the digital-era political communication strategies applied by the BERTAJI campaign team to win the 2024 Ogan Komering Ulu Regency election. Specifically, this research aims to identify the types of digital platforms used, explain the characteristics and formats of digital messages presented to local voters, and evaluate how the integration and coordination of online and offline campaign activities contribute to mobilizing support and vote acquisition, thus providing an empirical understanding of effective digital political communication models at the regency level.

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1 Theory of the Communication Function of Political Campaigns***

Political communication strategies are an essential aspect of political communication studies that every political candidate needs to achieve their political objectives (Batara, Prisanto, Ernungtyas, Irwansyah, & Hasna, 2020). In their book *Political Campaign Communication: Principles and Practices*, Judith S. Trent and Robert V. Friedenberg explained the principles and practices of political communication in the context of political campaigns (Risyad, 2022). According to Trent, Friedenberg, and Denton, political communication in campaigns involves four main stages: surfacing, primary, nomination, and election (Denton Jr, Voth, Trent, & Friedenberg, 2023). Each stage plays a crucial role in building the candidate's image, introducing their vision and mission, and establishing communication relationships with the public and voters (Ulfah, Mahmud, & Ananda, 2023).

Therefore, this theory is relevant for analyzing how candidate pairs implement their communication strategies at each stage of a campaign. Based on this theory, the campaign stages in the context of political branding can be explained as follows: The first stage, surfacing, aims to introduce candidates broadly to the public. At this stage, candidates build visibility and begin to shape their initial image

through symbols, slogans, and communication styles ([Rizky, Suparto, & Florina, 2025](#)). The researcher will analyze how the pair Teddy Meilwansya and Marjito Bachri utilize social media, particularly Instagram, to build self-recognition (political branding) from the beginning, through visual content, stories, and consistent campaign narratives. The second stage, primary, functions to consolidate early support, including from political parties, volunteers, or sympathizers ([Sopia & Wibasuri](#)). Political communication is directed toward building a loyal support base and selecting the messages to be carried forward to the next stage. At this stage, BERTAJI's digital communication strategy is assessed based on how it fosters interactions with volunteer groups or digital communities and the public's response to the ideas presented before the official registration period.

The nomination stage concerns the official confirmation of candidacy and strengthens the candidate's position as a legitimate one. Communication messages focus on differentiation from other candidates and reinforcing the political vision and mission ([Heryanto, 2024](#)). This study highlights how the pair delivered their key messages on social media during the official campaign period, including statements of political stance, party endorsements, and content that reinforced their leadership profiles. Finally, the election stage represents the peak of the campaign process, where political communication focuses on maximizing the number of votes. Candidates must persuade the public to vote for them through persuasive messages that appeal to their broad societal interests. The analysis focuses on how BERTAJI uses digital content, such as short videos, live sessions, testimonials, and endorsements from local figures ahead of election day, as well as strategies to build emotional closeness with voters online.

## **2.2 Theory of Political Contestation**

The theory of contestation, pioneered by Pierre Bourdieu, provides an analytical framework. Key terms for understanding Bourdieu's concept of contestation include habitus, field (arena), and capital ([Umami & Wibowo, 2021](#)). Bourdieu explains these concepts as follows. Bourdieu formulated the concept of habitus as social values internalized by individuals through long-term socialization, which shapes thinking patterns and stable behavioral tendencies ([Denton Jr et al., 2023](#); [Fatmawati & Sholikin, 2020](#)). When discussing habitus, it is inseparable from the field (arena). Both are interrelated, reflecting a two-way relationship between objective structures and habitus structures integrated into behavior. Habitus exists in the minds of actors, whereas the arena exists outside the actors' minds. The concept of the arena essentially represents a stage for the contestation of power to influence others in the struggle for dominance ([Huda, 2024](#)). From Bourdieu's perspective, agents do not act in a vacuum but operate within concrete social situations governed by a set of objective social relations ([Rizokulovich, 2024](#); [Umami & Wibowo, 2021](#)). According to Bourdieu's theoretical model, any social formation is structured through a series of hierarchically organized arenas.

Bourdieu also categorizes several types of capital often present within a field (arena), namely economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. First, economic capital includes means of production (machines, labor, and land), material assets (income and objects), and money, which can be readily used for various purposes and passed down through generations. Second, cultural capital encompasses intellectual qualifications acquired through formal education or family heritage, such as public performance skills, possession of valuable cultural objects, and knowledge. Third, social capital refers to the social networks held by actors (individuals or groups) in relation to other influential entities. Fourth, symbolic capital includes prestige, status, authority, and legitimacy.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Type of Research**

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with a content analysis method. Qualitative research can be defined as data that appear or are expressed in the form of words, sentences, narrative expressions, and images ([S. Sugiyono \(2010\)](#)) which is focused on the Instagram social media content of candidate pair Teddy Meilwansya and Marjito Bachri (BERTAJI). The purpose of the research is to understand the stage of political communication strategy implemented through social media in winning the 2024 Ogan Komering Ulu Regency Head Election. The research object is the official Instagram account of BERTAJI and the content uploaded during the campaign period of the 2024 Ogan Komering Ulu Regency Head Election ([D. Sugiyono, 2013](#)).

### **3.2 Data Collection Methods**

The data sources consist of primary data, which are obtained directly from the source and then collected by the researcher. In the context of this study, primary data were obtained through interviews and observations of parties directly involved in the political communication strategy of the candidate pair Teddy Meilwansya and Marjito Bachri in the 2024 Ogan Komering Ulu Regency Regional Election, as well as the BERTAJI pair's Instagram content, including photos, videos, Reels, captions, Stories, and public interactions. Secondary data consist of data that are not obtained or derived from the research subjects or the primary sources used for the study. This secondary data supplemented and reinforced the primary data ([Nasution, 2023](#)).

Supporting documents include online news articles, campaign activity documentation, and interviews with the BERTAJI campaign team. Data were collected through direct observation of the BERTAJI pair's official Instagram account. Documentation of posts and digital interactions. Semi-structured interviews with the campaign manager and social media volunteers. Analysis was conducted using A qualitative content analysis approach was used to identify campaign message themes based on the four stages of political communication according to Judith & Robert: surfacing, primary, nomination, and election. It explains the use of Instagram features as an application of new media theory: interactivity, message visualization, and participatory communication.

### **3.3 Data Analysis Techniques**

The analysis process includes data reduction, data presentation, and inductive conclusion drawing. This research focuses on the form and content of digital campaign messages, interaction strategies with young voters via Instagram, and the relationship between content strategies and the Communication Function of Political Campaign theory by Judith S. Trent and Robert V. Friedenberg.

## **4. Result and Discussions**

Based on the results of the content analysis of the Instagram accounts of Teddy Meilwansya and Marjito Bachri (BERTAJI) as well as interviews with the campaign team leader and volunteers, it was found that the political communication strategy implemented focused on building a positive candidate image through visual messages, familiarity narratives, and participatory interaction with the public. This discussion emphasizes the analysis of Instagram social media content reinforced by interviews with the campaign team leader, thus providing a comprehensive picture of the form and direction of the communication strategy. The research findings are then linked to the stages of the campaign in the context of political branding and the Communication Functions of Political Campaign theory proposed by Judith S. Trent and Robert V. Friedenberg.

### **4.1 Political Communication Strategy Stages of the BERTAJI Pair**

Based on research observations of the candidates' Instagram and interviews with the campaign team leader, it was found that BERTAJI significantly shifted the campaign focus from a conventional approach to a digital approach, especially through social media, namely, Instagram. This was reinforced by the statement of the BERTAJI campaign team leader. The campaign team leader said, "The political communication strategy of Teddy Meilwansya and Marjito Bachri (BERTAJI) was designed through initial mapping of voter behavior and characteristics, especially the younger generations active in digital spaces. Young generations tend to seek information, track records, and the image of regional head candidates through social media platforms. The campaign team also explored the interests, habits, and gathering locations of youth both digitally and physically to optimize the dissemination of messages more accurately." (Yunizir, interview, 2025). The political communication strategy of the candidate pair through Instagram is analyzed based on the four campaign stages proposed by Judith S. Trent and Robert V. Friedenberg, namely, surfacing, primary, nomination, and election.



Figure 2. Promoting a soccer score prediction contest with cash prizes

Figure 2 illustrates BERTAJI’s use of interactive engagement strategies by promoting a soccer score prediction contest with monetary incentives, highlighting their approach to mobilize community interest and voter participation through gamified social media content.



Figure 3. BERTAJI’s support for youth and sports activities in the community

Figure 3 demonstrates BERTAJI’s commitment to fostering youth involvement and community cohesion by supporting local sports initiatives, reflecting the candidates’ strategic investment in socially valued activities to strengthen public rapport.



Figure 4. Promoting the Mobile Legends esports tournament

Figure 4 depicts the promotion of the Mobile Legends esports tournament, exemplifying BERTAJI’s efforts to connect with younger demographics through digital and contemporary recreational platforms, thereby reinforcing their visibility and appeal among the youth constituency.

#### 4.1 Surfacing Stage

Instagram functions as an initial introduction stage where visual branding, slogans, and initial narratives are communicated consistently to form the first impression as an application of media convergence in the new media theory (Frenika, Verolyna, & Kurnia Syaputri, 2024). The initial campaign stage is an important phase in which the pair Teddy Meilwansya and Marjito Bachri (BERTAJI) begin to build their political image. Through Instagram, they consistently introduce themselves by displaying slogans, campaign logos, and visual content that emphasizes closeness to the community in the form of “SAYANGI OKU.” This narrative aims to express their concern for youth and regional development, uploaded regularly to form initial recognition (political branding), as shown in the Figure 5.



Figure 5. An Instagram post featuring a visual of the candidate pair and the slogan “SAYANGI OKU” as an early political branding tool

At this stage, the surfacing strategy carried out by the BERTAJI pair was successful in shifting the traditional campaign pattern that usually relies only on billboards, banners, and face-to-face meetings. Using Instagram, they are able to reach the young voter segment, who tend to be more active in digital spaces. Digital branding built from an early stage is not merely an introduction, but also an effort to build political differentiation so that the public immediately identifies the candidate pair Teddy Meilwansya and Marjito Bachri (BERTAJI) as a modern pair, close to the people, and responsive to the development of the times.

#### 4.2 Primary Stage

At the primary stage, Instagram interactive comment features are used to build dialogue and test issue resonance so that support consolidation occurs participatively, in accordance with the interactivity of new media (Ulva, 2025). After successfully introducing themselves, the pair, Teddy Meilwansya and Marjito Bachri (BERTAJI), entered the support consolidation stage. In this phase, they directed communication to strengthen the base of volunteers, sympathizers, and community networks. This strategy is clearly seen through the intensity of their interaction with the digital public, such as utilizing Instagram feeds and stories. In addition, ideas related to work programs, such as improving educational facilities and job opportunities for youth, began to be raised more specifically to test issue resonance with the public, as shown in the Figure 6 and 7.



Figure 6. Instagram post with campaign visuals and slogan introducing the candidate pair



Figure 7. In-person campaign activities showing mobilization, candidate visibility, and political legitimacy

**4.3 Nomination Stage**

At the nomination stage, the formal legitimacy obtained by the candidates is strengthened through the digital content of official announcements, party support, and testimonials from figures visualized and distributed through user networks, thereby expanding legitimacy via mass self-communication. The pair Teddy Meilwansya and Marjito Bachri (BERTAJI) were officially determined to be regional head candidates by the KPU. This momentum is utilized to strengthen political legitimacy through social media. They display official candidacy announcements, support from political parties, and testimonials from community figures expressing their trust in this pair. The digital content produced emphasizes differentiation from opponents, for example, highlighting a vision and mission considered more realistic, work programs targeting community needs, and a clear leadership track record.



Figure 8. Instagram post boosting candidate legitimacy during the nomination phase

Figure 8 show nomination stage shows the function of social media as an arena for political legitimacy. The formal validity of the candidacy granted by the KPU is expanded and reinforced through digital legitimacy on Instagram. By displaying party support and creatively publishing their vision and mission, the BERTAJI pair successfully strengthened their image as credible and electable candidates. According to the researcher, this step is important because it differentiates them from political opponents while ensuring that public trust is formed not only from formal procedures but also from positive perceptions developing in digital spaces.

**4.4 Election Stage**

At the election stage, intensive persuasive content strategies (testimonial videos, simple infographics, countdowns on Stories) and digital mobilization tactics are translated into reinforcement for sympathetic voters to attend and vote at polling stations, illustrating the role of new media in mobilizing political behavior and voting. This stage represents the peak of the campaign series. The pair Teddy Meilwansya and Marjito Bachri (BERTAJI) maximized political communication strategies by distributing persuasive content ahead of election day. Forms of implementation include testimonial

videos from citizens satisfied with their programs, infographics that make it easier for voters to understand the vision and mission, and endorsements from local figures with significant influence. In addition, the intensity of interaction through Instagram Feed and Story features is increased so that voters feel emotionally close to the candidates. This strategy is combined with conventional approaches, such as face-to-face campaigns and collaboration with local media, thereby widening the reach of the message (Hanafi & Kholil, 2025).



Figure 9. Instagram post with influencer video testimonial on the candidate's program



Figure 10. Instagram post of campaign activities with voter comments showing support



Figure 11. Post showing BERTAJI's intensified digital campaign before election day

Figures 9 through 11 illustrate BERTAJI's multifaceted digital campaign strategies in the lead-up to the 2024 Regional Head election. Figure 9 presents an Instagram post featuring an influencer video testimonial, highlighting the candidates' efforts to leverage social media personalities to communicate program initiatives and enhance credibility among followers. Figure 10 depicts Instagram posts of on-

the-ground campaign activities accompanied by voter comments, showcasing direct public engagement and the cultivation of grassroots support through interactive digital channels. Finally, Figure 11 demonstrates the intensification of BERTAJI's digital outreach immediately before election day, combining visual content, candidate imagery, and voter engagement to maximize visibility and reinforce campaign messaging across online platforms. Collectively, these figures provide empirical evidence of how integrated social media strategies can be employed to enhance candidate recognition, voter interaction, and campaign effectiveness in a local electoral context.

At the election stage, the pair Teddy Meilwansya and Marjito Bachri (BERTAJI) successfully utilized the reinforcement effect, namely encouraging voters who were already sympathetic to attend the polling stations and vote for them. Intensive digital communication strategies ahead of election day not only increased awareness but also strengthened emotional closeness, which became a determining factor in political choice. The success in obtaining 50.9% of the votes proves that the combination of digital and conventional approaches can optimize the function of political communication at the final stage. According to the researcher, this victory confirms that social media is not only an additional campaign tool but also a main instrument in winning political contests in the digital era.

## **5. Conclusions**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that the candidate pair of Teddy Meilwansya and Marjito Bachri (BERTAJI) successfully implemented a political communication strategy adapted to the digital era. By leveraging social media, particularly Instagram, they built a positive image, presented their vision and mission, and fostered closer participatory communication with the public, especially young voters. The shift from conventional campaign strategies to digital strategies was a key factor in BERTAJI's ability to attract public attention and support in the 2024 Ogan Komering Ulu Regency Election. The political communication strategy on Instagram was analyzed based on the four campaign stages proposed by Judith S. Trent and Robert V. Friedenberg: surfacing, primary, nomination, and election.

During the surfacing stage, the candidates introduced themselves and built their image through visual content and the slogan "Sayangi OKU." The primary stage focused on strengthening support through digital interactions with voters and volunteers in the campaign. At the nomination stage, the pair reinforced their political legitimacy by showcasing party endorsements and community leaders' support for their candidacy. Finally, during the election stage, the communication strategy was centered on persuasive messaging to encourage voter participation. The combination of digital strategies with conventional approaches has proven effective in building public trust and expanding the reach of campaign messages. BERTAJI's success in obtaining 50.9% of the votes illustrates that the creative and targeted use of social media can serve as a primary instrument in winning local political contests in the digital era.

Social media-based political communication functions not only as a promotional tool but also as a means of cultivating closeness, trust, and public participation in the democratic process. A key implication of this study is that digital transformation has become a determinant of political campaign success, even at the local election level. The effective use of Instagram to build images, communicate visions, and facilitate participatory interactions suggests that political actors in the modern era must prioritize social media as a primary communication channel that complements or even surpasses conventional methods. Political actors are thus required to master the four campaign stages proposed by Trent and Friedenberg and creatively integrate them into the digital ecosystem to reach, persuade, and mobilize young voters, making social media a vital instrument for building public trust and ultimately securing electoral victory.

### **5.2 Research Limitations**

This study had several limitations. First, it focuses exclusively on the political communication strategy of Teddy Meilwansya and Marjito Bachri (BERTAJI) through Instagram. Consequently, the findings do not fully reflect the application of political communication strategies on other digital platforms, such as Facebook, TikTok, or YouTube, which also play significant roles in political campaigns in the digital

era. Second, the research was conducted in the context of the 2024 Ogan Komering Ulu Regency election, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different social, cultural and political characteristics.

### **5.3 Suggestions and Directions for Future Research**

Future research should expand the scope by including multiple social media platforms and employing more diverse analytical approaches, such as digital discourse analysis or political communication network analysis. A deeper examination of voter participation and engagement, especially among young voters, in response to political messages on social media is suggested. Future studies could also focus on qualitative content analysis to identify the types of messages that are most effective in shaping perceptions and mobilizing young voters. Comparative studies on the effectiveness of social media-based communication versus conventional platforms in different local political contests are also recommended to test the generalizability of this model. Research on the impact of online participation on actual vote conversion and the influence of social media algorithms on message reach and polarization would provide a more comprehensive understanding of local political communication dynamics in the digital democracy era.

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### **Author Contributions**

SDR conceptualized the study, designed the methodology, collected the data, performed the formal analysis, wrote the original draft, and administered the project. RK provided supervision, validation, review, and guidance on the research design. KK contributed to the supervision, manuscript revision, and final approval of the submitted version.

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