

TOURISM AS AN AGENT OF CANNABIS NORMALIZATION: PERSPECTIVES FROM CANADA

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The 2018 legalization of cannabis in Canada provides an opportunity within a federally legalized context to offer recreational and leisure experiences that incorporate the purchase, consumption, production, and education of cannabis. The establishment of cannabis tourism as a tolerated and increasingly widespread and socially significant practice under the frameworks of legalization and normalization challenges its association with deviance in the tourism literature. The purpose of this article to rethink cannabis tourism as an agent of normalization. In adopting cannabis as a resource, the tourism industry sets standards that become embedded in a broader context of social acceptance. Evidence from a study that documents cannabis tourism in Canada in the first few years following legalization is used to illustrate how tourism suppliers have adopted cannabis as a resource. This article contributes a qualitative assessment of normalization to the literature through an examination of both a database of cannabis tourism-related businesses and the narratives of suppliers in the cannabis tourism industry. Tourism is conceptualized as an agent of normalization by illustrating how it facilitates the accessibility and availability, everyday prevalence, increased tolerance, and social and cultural accommodation of cannabis.

Key words: Cannabis tourism; Drug tourism; Normalization; Canada; Nondeviant consumption

Introduction

With the passing of bill C-45, or The Cannabis Act, on October 17, 2018, the cultivation, processing, selling, and possession of cannabis for recreational adult-use purposes in Canada is legal. The Cannabis Act is a public health approach to

regulation that has the aim of protecting youth, minimizing associated harms, maintaining public health and safety, and redirecting resources from criminal prohibition to a legalized environment (Cannabis Act, 2018). Policies surrounding consumption are the responsibility of individual provinces and territories, but nationally adults (18 years

of age or older depending on the province or territory) are able to purchase fresh or dried cannabis, cannabis oil, cannabis seeds and plants for cultivation from authorized retailers, possess up to 30 g of dried cannabis in public, grow up to four cannabis plants per household for personal use, share up to 30 g of dried cannabis with other adults, and make food and beverages at home containing cannabis (Cannabis Act, 2018; Cox, 2018). As the first G7 country to nationally legalize cannabis, Canada offers very rare economic and social opportunities for entrepreneurs. Although much of the focus has been on growers and sellers, another sector impacted by legalization is tourism.

The establishment of cannabis tourism as a tolerated and increasingly widespread and economically significant practice under the frameworks of legalization and normalization challenges its historical association with deviance, social unacceptability, and drug tourism as discussed in the tourism literature. Drug tourism involves tourist use of drugs that are considered illegal or illegitimate at either the destination or in the tourist's home country (Uriely & Belhassen, 2005), is a socially condemned activity involving undesirable and deviant tourist behavior (Wen & Meng, 2021; Ying et al., 2019), and implies a moral assessment of a behavior that departs from the norms of everyday life (Ryan & Kinder, 1996). In this literature, cannabis consumption as it relates to tourism is positioned as a marginal and noninstitutional activity operating at the edge of social legitimacy and disconnected from the formal tourism industry established at a destination (MacCoun, 2011; Peretti-Watel & Lorente, 2004; Skliamis & Korf, 2018; Uriely & Belhassen, 2005; Wen et al., 2018). Given that cannabis use is historically, and currently in many parts of the world, an activity that has largely taken place within illegal environments, it is not surprising that tourism research addresses cannabis and its consumption in these terms.

Only with state-level legalization in Colorado, USA, in 2012 has cannabis emerged in the tourism literature as a form of nondeviant leisure and recreation with norms around tolerance and social acceptance. Legalization is a liberal policy that supports broader trends in normalization, which in Canada were under way prior to the implementation of the Cannabis Act in 2018 (Erickson & Hathaway,

2010; Hathaway, 2004; Osborne & Fogel, 2008). Normalization describes the changing attitudes towards cannabis in the West where it becomes accepted and embedded into already existing social practices (Parker, 2005; Parker et al., 1998, 2002). Moral boundaries are adjusted to incorporate previously stigmatized and stereotyped acts into the realm of normality (Hathaway et al., 2018). Cannabis tourism in legal contexts is identified as challenging the boundaries of legal consumption (Keul & Eisenhauer, 2019) and is the springboard from which tourism is conceptualized as an agent of normalization in this article.

The incorporation of cannabis into the tourism experience "as a tourism product is directly related to the structure set by the law" (Keul & Eisenhauer, 2019, p. 150). Cannabis tourism challenges social perceptions that connect cannabis consumption and deviancy (Keul & Eisenhauer, 2019), and confirms that tourism, as well as cannabis more broadly in contemporary society, needs to be explored outside the frameworks of abnormal and deviant behavior (Hammersley et al., 2001; Parker et al., 1998; Peretti-Watel & Lorente, 2004). Kang et al. (2019) suggested cannabis tourism is "travel to experience recreational or medical cannabis consumption and its links to the local lifestyle" (p. 268). In the past 5 years, cannabis tourism has emerged as a segment of special interest tourism (SIT). Framing tourism as an agent of normalization contributes to understanding cannabis within the realm of legitimacy as a type of SIT, which will generate questions and issues that concern major tourism stakeholders including visitors, residents, tourism authorities, hospitality sectors, and government at those destinations where cannabis is legalized. The number of countries that allow for recreational cannabis consumption is currently limited; however, there is a worldwide movement towards legalization, as evidenced in Mexico, Israel, the European Union, South Africa, Australia, the US, and New Zealand. The cannabis tourism industry emerging in Canada is indicative of future opportunities for tourism at destinations around the world.

The purpose of this article is to rethink cannabis tourism as an agent of normalization. Tourism is an example of an already existing social institution that, in adopting cannabis as a resource, plays a role in normalizing processes by setting standards

that become embedded in the broader social acceptance of cannabis. The article's objectives are to: (1) identify the ways tourism-related businesses use cannabis as a resource; (2) illustrate the several ways in which the tourism industry facilitates normalization; and (3) argue for cannabis tourism as a category onto itself that is disassociated from the deviant framings of drug tourism. Cannabis-related attractions and activities "demonstrate the growing interest in cannabis in the West and should, in turn, be seen as signifiers of the contemporary normalization process of cannabis in Western societies" (Belhassen et al., 2007, p. 317). In this article tourism is considered a context in which normalizing processes play out and is evidenced by empirical research that documents the diversity and availability of cannabis tourism products and experiences in Canada.

Although research has investigated cannabis and tourism in places like Amsterdam and Colorado, it has yet to be addressed as a topic of study in a federally legal context within the framework of normalization. It is critical that a Canadian perspective, specifically, is developed because, currently, it is the only country in the world that has federally legalized cannabis and permits tourism to emerge around its consumption for leisure and recreational purposes. States like California and Colorado are setting the bar for cannabis tourism, but Canada is in a position of global leadership with respect to developing informed policy for a socially acceptable leisure activity (i.e., tourism) that involves an historically illegal, stigmatized, and misunderstood, but now widely used and tolerated, substance. Given the infancy of this industry, the application of concepts and theory to new types of tourism emerging in a federally legal context is necessary for establishing a research agenda that can serve as a baseline for future work.

It is important to note that cannabis has a multitude of names. "Marijuana," "weed," "pot," "ganga," "Mary jane," and "grass" are all examples of words that colloquially refer to cannabis and carry with them connotations that reproduce stigma. Cannabis is part of the formal, scientific name of the plant (*Cannabis sativa L.*) and is recognized as the industry standard not only in Colorado (Keul & Eisenhauer, 2019), but in Canada. For this reason, the word cannabis is used throughout the article.

Normalization Theory

A definition of "marijuana" tourism offered by Taylor (2016) is "purchasing with the intent to consume marijuana [sic] products while temporarily traveling away from one's normal place of work or residence" (p. 6). The places traveled to are selected in whole or in part because of the availability of legal (or illegal) cannabis for purchase and/or consumption as part of the experience (Carter, 2017; Taylor, 2016, 2019). Tourist motives to consume cannabis while traveling are understood to be influenced by the normalization of cannabis use in Western societies, which makes tourism a context in which to examine the implications of normalizing processes (Belhassen et al., 2007). Reconceptualizing cannabis tourism builds from the work of Keul and Eisenhauer (2019) addressing how tourism shapes and changes narratives of deviance. Although not framed in this way, their work suggests that the conscious challenging of political boundaries through activism is part of the processes of normalization.

Normalization is a framework that provides a way to assess shifts in social contexts with respect to the social acceptability of certain drugs, which in addition to cannabis also include amphetamines, LSD, and ecstasy (Parker et al., 1998, 2002). On a general level, the normalization of cannabis is understood as a representative move away from deviant activities on the margins towards mainstream activities of the center (Aldridge et al., 2011), and is concerned with "recreational drug use," or the occasional and sensible use of certain substances in certain settings in a controlled way (Parker et al., 2002). As demonstrated by several studies that highlight how cannabis is an increasingly acceptable part of mainstream culture (Erickson & Hathaway, 2010; Parker, 2005; Sznitman & Taubman, 2016), the inclusion of stigmatized or deviant behaviors into everyday life, and the potential they have for eventually being valued by society, is fundamental to normalization (Parker, 2005). It is within the realm of normality that preferred kinds of behavior (Burns, 1992), which incorporate society's wider standards and expectations, are enforced (Hathaway et al., 2011).

Increasingly, cannabis is considered a "lifestyle choice" and is commonly consumed by many

Canadians in their leisure time (Duff et al., 2012; Erickson, 1999; Osborne & Fogel, 2008). For this reason, cannabis use needs to be addressed in terms of lifestyle, leisure, and consumption preferences (Parker, 2005). Cannabis consumption is labeled as a form of leisure behavior undertaken in an individual's recreational time (Liebregts et al., 2015), often used for the purposes of enhancing other activities, stimulating creativity (Lau et al., 2015), and positively effecting social experiences (Dekker et al., 2009). Relaxation (Hathaway, 2004), experiencing nature, contemplating existential matters, and making physical activities more enjoyable are cited as examples of how cannabis consumption is related to other leisure choices (Moffat et al., 2009; Sharp et al., 2011). The variation in reasons for consuming cannabis for leisure is likely to be reflected in the variation in consumer leisure interests (Gould et al., 2019), which lends tourism as an ideal context for integrating cannabis as a "reasoned choice" (Williams & Parker, 2001) into leisure time. In fact, both cannabis use and tourism are viewed as practices that take place in leisure time in Western society (Peretti-Watel & Lorenete, 2004).

Parker (2005, pp. 206–207) originally suggests six indicators of normalization with reference to cannabis, which have since been reworked: (1) increased access and availability of illicit drugs in the community; (2) increased prevalence of drug use; (3) increased tolerance of drug use among both users and nonusers; (4) expectations among current abstainers regarding future initiation of illicit drug use; (5) the "cultural accommodation" of drug cultures in youth-oriented film, TV, and music; and (6) more liberal policy shifts. With legalization comes the substantial increase in the accessibility and availability of cannabis (Parker et al., 2002). Legalization itself is a policy shift that informs normalization (Dickenson & Jacques, 2021). As previously mentioned, in Canada, The Cannabis Act federally regulates how cannabis is produced, marketed, and distributed. The legal context reflects a broader shift in values towards tolerance of cannabis use by users and nonusers, alike. Tolerant attitudes towards and increased prevalence of cannabis reinforce one another in the progression of normalization (Aldridge et al., 2011) as do positive and/or supportive representations of cannabis use in the media (Gruber et al., 2005; Primack et al., 2008).

Existing studies largely frame cannabis normalization as a "youth phenomenon" (Aldridge et al., 2011; Erickson & Hathaway, 2010; Hathaway et al., 2018) or in the context of life course transitions (Duff et al., 2012; Duff & Erickson, 2014). These studies emphasize the individual and peer group factors that influence cannabis use; however, they do not address the social, cultural, and structural contexts of cannabis use cognizant of local culture (Measham & Shiner, 2009; Pennay & Moore, 2010). It is argued that the processes of normalization are more situated and will vary depending on the interplay between macrolevel cultural processes and structural forces and microlevel behavior and social norms that are specific to particular sites, settings, and social groups (Duff et al., 2012; Measham & Shiner, 2009; Pennay & Moore, 2010). In addition to addressing consumption, normalization is concerned with the cultural context and social setting in which cannabis consumption takes place (Parker et al., 2002), as well as the way in which cannabis use is constructed, perceived, and tolerated as a social practice (Duff et al., 2012). The "supply transaction" and the "ritual and enjoyment" in obtaining cannabis among social groups (Coomer et al., 2016), for example, are considered "adjunct to the relative normalization of drug use" (p. 256) proposed by Parker et al. (1998). Context is an extension of use inherent to normal regular recreational consumption that cannot be easily separated from the act of consumption itself. This makes way for a "generalized normalization" that applies to the exchanges and sites where social supply takes place and is integrated into "mainstream" society (Kolar et al., 2018), which includes tourism.

Studies that address processes of normalization within legal contexts are minimal, which points to the significance this article has beyond the tourism literature. Although not in the context of tourism, Dickenson and Jacques (2021) address the structural forces behind normalization and symbolic boundaries in Amsterdam coffee shops by highlighting how legal frameworks guide standards of moral acceptability. In this article, the analysis of normalization and its features in a legal context is extended by highlighting how a diverse range of tourism suppliers in Canada have adopted cannabis as a resource. In doing so, it responds to calls for investigations into the social determinants and

contexts of normalization (Measham & Shiner, 2009; Pennay & Moore, 2010), and positions cannabis tourism more broadly in cultural discussions around challenging stigma.

Methodology

This article draws from a study that investigates cannabis tourism as it emerges in the first few years of legalization in Canada. A database of all cannabis tourism-related businesses in Canada was developed and updated on an ongoing basis over the course of 2 years (2018–2020). This generated an inventory of the various ways in which legal cannabis is a resource for Canada's network of tourism supply. Table 1 shows a classification of cannabis tourism resources in Canada based on several components or sectors of the tourism industry identified by the North American Industrial Classification System (Polovitz-Nickerson et al., 2014). Collectively, these components make up a network of linkages among various suppliers that operate across several sectors to provide a normalized tourism experience

involving cannabis. Table 2 provides a summary of the examples of cannabis tourism-related businesses mentioned in each category of the database. The examples give an overall quick snapshot of where cannabis tourism is occurring in Canada and how cannabis is connected to the formal tourism industry as a resource.

To populate the database, a comprehensive Internet search was performed, which included reviewing news stories and posts made by cannabis tourism-related businesses to social media sites such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Establishing personal contacts with business owners and other key industry actors as well as attending consumer trade shows and industry conferences, prior to COVID-19, were also informative in revealing developments in and linkages among actors in the cannabis tourism industry. Also, going on several tours allowed for information to be collected by way of direct observation and first-hand experience as a cannabis tourist. From the database, potential participants were recruited for interviews. In many instances, interviewees were another source of

Table 1
Cannabis Tourism in Canada

Sector	Facilities/Amenities/Service Provided	Activities
Accommodation	"Bud and breakfasts"; Resorts; Condo/apartment rentals; Boutique hotels; Hostels; Cottage/cabin/yurt rentals; Campsites; Chain hotels; Independent hotels/inns; Private and/or shared house; Loft; Guestroom	Getaways; Retreats; spas
Food & beverage	Restaurants; Catering companies; Private chefs	Cooking classes; Sushi rolling classes; Pairings; Tastings; Infused food and drink
Attractions & special events	Cannabis retail stores; Lounges; Accessory shops; Production facilities; Yoga studios; Convention centers; Spa; Visitors centers; Glass blowing/art studio; Nightclubs; Bud-tending service	Purchasing cannabis and related paraphernalia; Public spaces of consumption; Grow room viewing; Comedy shows; Yoga classes; Festivals; Consumer trade shows; Cooking class; Massage/spa; Joint rolling classes; Glass blowing demonstrations; "Puff 'n paint"; Virtual reality; Growing competitions; Cannabis wedding shows; Cannabis weddings; Bachelor/bachelorette parties; Business conventions
Adventure and outdoor recreation	Golf courses; Parks Canada; Mountains/ski hills	Hiking; Camping; "Glamping"; Snowmobiling; Skiing (downhill and cross country); snow shoeing; Fishing; Ice fishing; Canoeing; Wilderness trips
Travel services (services that support the tourist)	Tour guides; Websites; Cannabis concierge; Accommodations host	City tours (walking); Bus tours (driving); Grow facility tours; Curated experiences; Shuttle service; Booking capabilities; Planning tool
Tourism services (services that support the tourism industry)	Government regulations; Marketing and promotions; Safety; Education; Training; Research (data collection)	Industry summits and conferences; Consulting businesses; Regulating bodies; Accreditation organizations; National organizations

Table 2
Examples of Cannabis Tourism Across Canada

Sector/Business Name	Classification	Location	Activity Details
Tours			
Cannanaskis	Tour company	Calgary, Alberta	Tours
Wicked Weed Tours	Tour company	Kelowna, British Columbia	Tours
TourBuds	Tour company	Toronto, Ontario	Tours
Accommodation			
Quality Suites	Chain hotel	Regina, Saskatchewan; Montreal, Quebec	In-room consumption
The Pink Elephant	Boutique hotel	Hamilton, Ontario	In-room consumption
The Farmhouse	Private house/cottage	Penticton, British Columbia	Outdoor common consumption areas
Sir Sam's Inn & Spa	Resort	Haliburton, Ontario	Indoor & outdoor common consumption areas
Food & beverage			
Cannabis Cooking Company	Education	Toronto, Ontario	Cooking classes
The Green Chef	Catering Company	Toronto, Ontario	Infused food
Attractions			
Tweed Production Facility	Visitor facility	Smith's Falls, Ontario	Education, grow operation
Hotbox Café	Lounge	Toronto, Ontario	Consumption and events
Vapor Central	Lounge	Toronto, Ontario	Consumption and events
New Amsterdam Cafe	Lounge	Vancouver, British Columbia	Consumption and events
Kelly's Green Lounge	Lounge	Orono, Ontario	Consumption and events
Rolling Greens	Golf Course	Smith's Falls, Ontario	Consumption and recreation
Events			
Ontario Cannabis Festival	Festival	Kitchener, Ontario	Consumption and celebration
Lift & Co	Consumer trade show	Toronto, Ontario; Vancouver, British Columbia	Education and cannabis accessories
HempFest Cannabis Expo	Consumer trade show	Calgary, Alberta	Education and cannabis accessories
The Karma Cup	Competition	Toronto, Ontario	Education and cannabis accessories
Okanagan Cannabis Cup	Competition	Kelowna, British Columbia	Education and cannabis accessories
Bud Buffet	Bud-tending service	Toronto, Ontario	Events supplier
High Bar	Bud-tending service	Toronto, Ontario	Events supplier
Cannabis Comedy Festival	Comedy show	Toronto, Ontario	Events and consumption
Adventure & outdoor recreation			
Algonquin Provincial Park	Park	Algonquin (Ontario)	Camping and hiking
Butiquescapes	Tour company	Vancouver (British Columbia)	Helicopter ride, "glamping"
Travel services			
Cannabis Hotels.com	Travel website	Canada-wide	Search engine
HiBnb	Travel website	Canada-wide	Search engine
Tourism services			
The National Association of Cannabis Tourism	Industry organization	Canada-wide	Association
GoCanna	Industry organization	Canada-wide	Accreditation

information about cannabis tourism-related businesses that could be added to the database.

Structured, in-depth interviews gathered qualitative data on the experiences and perceptions of 32 Canadian cannabis tourism-related suppliers from each of the tourism sectors identified. In relaying how sense is made of an experience, interviews collect narrative resources that convey a situated context (Gubrium & Holstien, 2003, 2008). The views of tourism suppliers are valuable sources of

information because they inform notions of what is acceptable and normal behavior by those that adhere to the rules set by the state (Dickenson & Jacques, 2021). Although normalization from the side of demand would reveal insights into tolerance around consumption, for instance, this investigation is beyond the scope of this article, but well suited for future research. Both the supply and demand sides of tourism offer insights into normalization, but in this article supply-side perspectives are used

to examine the social and structural contexts that determine normalization.

Transcripts and field notes were coded according to preset themes, as well as themes that emerged from the data. A content analysis of coded themes (i.e., textual data) was performed wherein related data were grouped into subcategories to reveal patterns within the wider theme. This article contributes a qualitative assessment of normalization to the literature through an examination of a database of tourism-related businesses and the narratives of suppliers in the cannabis tourism industry. The findings reflect experiences and attitudes that convey an understanding of social practices and processes by which cannabis is utilized as a resource for tourism that facilitates normalized constructions. Illustrating the ways in which cannabis is used as a tourism resource is theoretically significant for advancing studies in normalization.

Cannabis Tourism in Canada

This section paints a picture of the cannabis tourism industry as it has emerged in Canada within the first few years of legalization. Tables 1 and 2 are used along with interview narratives, expert comments, and participant observation to illustrate the numerous ways in which tourism suppliers utilize cannabis as a resource.

Tours

Tours take a variety of forms and involve an array of activities, depending on the tour. Walking or driven tours move around small groups of individuals (10 or less), who may or may not know one another and who may or may not be cannabis consumers. Either on foot, by passenger bus/van, or by luxury vehicle, tourists are moved around to various locations to experience a mix of education, entertainment, adventure, and local sights. Tourists are briefed on local rules around consumption, which vary around the country, and are made aware of the etiquette expected while on the tour:

It is important to lay out what is allowed and what is not allowed. You don't want people to get into trouble; you want people to be safe. Some people think you can smoke anywhere. No, you can't. I will show you where you can smoke so that it

doesn't bother or offend anyone. Some people also think they can smoke as much as they want. Also, no, you can't. I will cut you off, although that is extremely rare. I show people how to have a good experience with cannabis. I want them to be satisfied. (Tour Operator B)

Typically, before being invited to consume on the tour, tourists are presented with an opportunity to legally purchase cannabis at a retail location. In Colorado, the "dispensary" is generally the first stop on a tour (Keul & Eisenhauer, 2019). Brick and mortar retail stores that supply legal cannabis act as tourism attractions from which tourists can legally purchase cannabis and are in every major city across Canada. Government or privately operated walk-in retail stores are regulated by the federal government and, in many cases, resemble an upscale shopping experience. Purchasing cannabis does not require the customer be a Canadian citizen, but it does require the consumer to be 18 years or older, depending on the province or territory. Individuals, including tourists, are allowed to possess, carry, and share up to 30 g of cannabis anywhere in Canada. Visitors can also order regulated cannabis from online stores and have it delivered within days to their accommodation. Of the eight Canadian tour companies interviewed, all eight had retail locations as a stop on the tour. While at the retail store, "budtenders" educate customers about the products they are purchasing, which has the goal of increasing levels of customer confidence:

Once they've been on the tour and have made a purchase in the store, they now know how to do it. They go back home and become popular with their friends because they show their friends how to buy legal weed. I guess maybe people are intimidated to come into the stores because they don't know what to expect. Once you come on the tour, you will know what to expect. I think that helps with the stigma! (Retail Operator H)

Previous research identified that learning how to buy and consume cannabis are important reasons among tourists for taking a cannabis tour. Also identified is the hope among tour guides that information learned on the tour will be taken back to family and friends at home (Keul & Eisenhauer, 2019). Other important stops on the tour include accessory stores ("head shops"), restaurants, and

lounges at which cannabis-themed activities can take place include learning how to roll a joint, talks about cannabis edibles, a yoga class, or “puff and paint” events. Depending on the tour, the itinerary is set ahead of time or the tourist might be offered a list of activities from which to choose their own adventure. Tours can be based around different themes and activities that combine various aspects of a city’s cannabis scene along with sightseeing. In Canada, cannabis consumption in a vehicle, even as a passenger, is not legal, and several bus tours invite guests to consume cannabis off-vehicle, at designated stops.

Tours provide opportunities for tourists to immerse themselves in a cannabis-friendly experience with like-minded folk (Keul & Eisenhauer, 2019). It is also an opportunity for tourists to learn from the in-depth knowledge of the tour guide on numerous aspects of the plant, which is an important part of the overall experience:

I want people to have a good time, but I want to educate people. I want people to walk away with something they didn’t know before. I think that is what will chip away at the stigma. The more people that take the tour, the more people will be educated about the plant. (Tour Operator D)

Cannabis is a resource for tourism and vice versa. Tours provide a point of education for learning about a product that is new to, or not well known by, a lot of consumers:

Cannabis has been an illegal substance for so long that not only has the physical product been inaccessible but the knowledge with anything to do with cannabis has been inaccessible, too. Now that it is legal, people are thirsty for information; they want to learn about the different strains and the difference between cannabinoids and terpenes and their effects. They’re also interested in learning about different types of products. There have been people on the tour who have never heard of a vape pen or don’t know what concentrates are. They can learn all about these things on the tour, so it is really well-suited for those who have less experience with cannabis or who are cannabis curious. They go home a savvier cannabis consumer, really, even if they don’t consume! (Tour Operator E)

Similar findings in Colorado identify that education is an integral part of the tour and that the tour

guide’s desire to educate people about the plant is linked to cannabis’ deviance and illegality, which made it difficult to access information about it for so long. Strain information, methods of consumption, plant pharmacology (Keul & Eisenhauer, 2019), and different consumption methods (Taylor, 2019) are common types of information sought by tourists. To this list can be added knowledge about the plant’s history and growing process as well as details around new products and how to use them.

Accommodation

Various forms of accommodation have leveraged cannabis as part of their offerings. As per the Cannabis Act (2018), the edible consumption of cannabis is allowed in hotel, motel, or inn rooms that are primarily designated as a sleeping accommodation. Under the Act, it is assumed that if smoking is allowed in rooms, it is understood that guests are allowed to smoke and/or vape cannabis in the room, unless otherwise stated.

Although most chain hotels in the country are smoke free, there are increasingly more options opening up for tourists interested in consuming cannabis in a semiprivate setting. “Bud and breakfasts” are smaller scale, often independently owned, cannabis-friendly accommodations that allow some degree of cannabis consumption on the premises. One “host” described the additional benefits of staying at a bud and breakfast:

When people stay with us, we are their information reference point for all things cannabis—whether it be answering questions like “where’s the local dispensary?,” or “where’s a local cannabis-friendly show?”—guiding them through the authentic local experience with the cannabis culture in the area is part of it. (Accommodation Host G)

Although breakfast might not always be part of the package, the hosts often have connections in the community and can direct the guest to the right eating establishments, especially if it is a cannabis-infused meal they are after. This service is similar to “cann-cierge” services in which tour guides establish connections with hotel employees (Keul & Eisenhauer, 2019) in efforts to provide tourists with the information and services they are looking for.

Accommodations that self-identify as cannabis friendly include renting private homes, cottages/cabins, condos, apartments, chalets, lofts, and rooms in houses. Rooms in small boutique hotels offer cannabis-centric amenities for guests as do opportunities to rent a yurt, which include communal spaces both indoors and out to consume cannabis with other guests. Spas, resorts, and get-aways that incorporate elements of wellness also designate spaces for cannabis consumption and are considered destinations in and of themselves.

Attractions

Tourism attractions that feature cannabis are part of a destination's recreation and entertainment offerings. The Tweed visitor's center in the small town of Smiths Falls, Ontario is noteworthy in that it is part of a licensed production facility:

The Tweed Visitor Centre is a captivating and interactive way to learn all about our facility and our favourite plant. Take a peek into real grow rooms, learn about cannabis from the inside out, and travel through its fascinating history. (Tweed, 2021)

Viewing windows that look into growing rooms with plants at various stages of growth are part of the experience, but visitors do not enter the growing rooms, nor do they get a chance to touch the plant. As noted in research in Colorado, grow facilities are important tourism attractions that are often a stop the tour (Keul & Eisenhauer, 2019). Despite the importance of visitors centers to cannabis tourism, which function much like a museum in exhibiting information and material related to a specific item, it is a place where tourists neither consume nor purchase cannabis (although, in the future this might change). Rather, it is an attraction where the primary experience with the plant revolves around learning and education.

The town of Smiths Falls has leveraged the visitor's center as part of a 3-year economic development strategy in which cannabis tourism is prioritized as a major source of income in hopes of making the town a tourist attraction. The town's strategy is to brand Smiths Falls as the top cannabis tourism destination in Canada (Town of Smiths Falls, 2020). The strategy is a result of community

members, the municipality, businesses, and tourism experts working together to chart a path for an economic future based around cannabis. "Rolling Greens," North America's first cannabis-themed golf course, is another unique cannabis-themed attraction located outside of Smiths Falls and provides a space where golfers can safely enjoy cannabis while they golf.

Lounges are also attractions associated with cannabis tourism. Similar to "coffee shops" in Amsterdam, lounges are spaces where cannabis can be consumed publicly to some degree. Antismoking laws minimally permit lounges in Canada; however, this has not stopped creative business owners from finding ways to operate as lounges, which have attracted tourists:

We've had lots of people from Brazil and India, and people from the States. Typically, they show up thinking they can buy weed here, which they can't, and we send them down the street to the store. When they come back, they go through the whole product offering; they rent a bong or a vaporizer. These are things that are new to them and showing them how they work is part of the lounge's service offering. The comedy shows attract a lot of people from out of town, so I guess that is tourism, too. (Lounge Operator E)

Lounges do not provide cannabis but are spaces in which patrons can bring and consume their own in specially designated indoor areas (which are rare) or outside patios. Many lounges hold comedy nights or other types of entertainment and activities, not only for tourists but for local members of the community. One of the services some lounges provide is to offer consumption accessories such as volcanoes (for vaporizing cannabis flower), dab rigs, pipes, and bongs. Lounge employees are available to guide guests through using more complex equipment, especially if it is for first time use. This is similar to the role tour guides in Colorado play in educating tourists on different consumption methods and devices (Taylor, 2019).

The lounge is an example of how education around cannabis is not necessarily directed towards cannabis consumers. As one lounge operator noted:

People come by the lounge and they can see that nothing bad is happening; no one's life is in

danger. People get to see the social consumption of cannabis in action, and it's not threatening. People are just chilling and hanging and having conversations. The lounge is a platform for cannabis to exist in a normal way and I want people to see that, whether they consume weed or not. Weed is legal now. And, people who are nonconsumers are becoming more accustomed to cannabis as part of life. They might not interact with it on a daily basis, but at least they can see it is not an evil thing. (Lounge Operator J)

Cannabis tourism encompasses attending cannabis festivals, some of which are a well-established part of the tourism industry, especially in the US. The city-approved cannabis-themed festival held on April 20 every year in Denver, Colorado, for example, contributes to visitation by out-of-state tourists for the purpose of recreational cannabis consumption (Kang et al., 2019). Although not as large as some cannabis festivals in the US, "The Ontario Cannabis Festival" held in Kitchener in the summer of 2019 was a small–medium-sized event that provided a space where goers could celebrate cannabis with entertainment, education, and food. Vendors and exhibitors were also part of the festival where consumers could learn about and purchase new cannabis-related products available on the market, but not cannabis itself. In this way, the festival serves as a commercial fair dominated by entrepreneurs selling new products and services to the market (Sklamis & Korf, 2018). Goers were encouraged to "bring your own cannabis" and enjoy consumption in designated areas on the festival grounds. Several festival goers expressed their disbelief of openly consuming cannabis in a public space.

Competitions that recognize the work of the best cannabis growers and producers are another type of event that function as attractions (Belhassen et al. 2007). The "Karma Cup" and "Okanagan Cannabis Cup," and several others, are Canadian examples of competitions and often include a "vendor village," DJs, speakers' panel, live music, art installations, and an awards ceremony. In describing the atmosphere of the competition, one organizer noted the broader importance of the event for educating the public:

The competition is an event that brings together a diverse group of people: there are the younger

folk, of course, but there are also people in their 40s and 50s and even in their 70s and 80s. And, they are all just wanting to learn about cannabis and take in the scene and enjoy it. People might have fear around cannabis, but the more attendees we can attract, the more we can shatter stereotyped beliefs. (Competition Organizer F)

"Lift & Co" (Toronto and Vancouver), "Cannabis Living Expo" (Toronto), and "HempFest Cannabis Expo" (Calgary) are larger consumer and business trade shows that draw in a significant amount of people. These events offer cannabis enthusiasts an opportunity to expand their knowledge of the product and the industry by talking to experienced professionals at every stage of the commodity chain, from growing equipment to consulting agencies for medical prescriptions. In referring to a trade show attendee, one vendor identified a market segment of non-cannabis consumers attending the show:

This guy was not a cannabis consumer. He was a business tourist interested in knowing about the industry. He wanted to know about Canadian companies that infuse cannabis into food products. He had some kind of retail business in the States, California, I think. (Trade Show Vendor I)

Although not events in and of themselves, "Bud Buffet" and "High Bar" are hospitality and event businesses that provide "full-service bud tending experiences." Unlike festivals and trade shows, these are businesses that serve cannabis to of-age guests at several types of events. Mobile and in-house locations at certain venues are available for weddings, corporate events, and private functions. Certified staff are on site to supervise distribution and educate guests around dosage.

Adventure and Outdoor Recreation

Like special events and attractions, activities related to adventure and outdoor recreation are part of a destination's entertainment offerings. Given that Canada's destination image incorporates wilderness and the natural environment (Draper & Minca, 1997), the integration of cannabis into these experiences is a natural fit for travel to Canada. A close relationship is seen as existing between nature and cannabis, which is leveraged by one tour company:

All of our hikes are 420-friendly. Cannabis can help people take on a different perspective; to really appreciate the environment and to connect with nature. It affords people the chance to just be themselves. That's what they experience on the tour. (Tour Operator F)

Luxury tour companies offer novelty experiences such as taking guests to remote mountain wilderness areas via helicopter, where at the destination, guests participate in a “glamping” experience. Some tour companies specialize in fully guided cannabis-friendly backcountry canoe trips in Provincial Parks. Included in the package is equipment, transport, food (some of it infused), and guides who are experienced with cannabis. Downhill and cross-country skiing as well as snowmobiling, snow showing, fishing, and ice-fishing are opportunities to engage in heightened experiences with cannabis by way of outdoor activities.

Food and Beverage

Although the regulation, availability, and consumption of edibles is still in process, cannabis intersects the food and beverage sector in several ways. Infused cuisine with multicourse meals prepared by private chefs or catering companies for dinner parties and events is one option. Cooking classes organized by chefs and owners of restaurants for people who want to learn about a broad range of topics including dosing edibles, infusing food with cannabis, and making a cannabis-infused meal are also on offer. Although not yet regulated, tourism experts predict that “the on-premise sale of packaged goods is likely to develop the food and beverage sector of tourism” (Potter, 2020). Reciprocally, as another cannabis tourism expert identifies, “the food and beverage sector in tourism will evolve the way people get educated about dosing cannabis edibles” (Applegarth, 2020a). Enabling legislation around the sale and consumption of cannabis is identified by the industry as “communicating to future tourists that the destination is a safe place to come and have an experience with cannabis—this is part of the product” (Applegarth 2020a). This understanding aligns with the importance that potential visitors place on safety when it comes to consuming cannabis at a destination (Parnes et al., 2018).

Travel and Tourism Services

Several cannabis-focused websites offer travel services that support tourists interested in incorporating some degree of cannabis into their trip, including finding cannabis-friendly accommodations, events, and activities. CannabisHotels.com and HiBnb.com are two Canadian-based websites where tourists can search for cannabis-friendly rental listings in Canada and worldwide. The websites are an important planning resource for tourists:

People can come to the site and get all the information they need to plan their trip. They educate themselves on the destination and then they have a more enjoyable time. They feel more comfortable knowing that they booked a room at a place that won't bother them about smoking pot. (Website Operator K)

Tourism services are those organizations that support the development and needs of the tourism industry, as opposed to the needs of the visitor. These services include marketing, consulting, training, and accrediting, which are supplied by a variety of organizations, associations, government agencies, and businesses. The National Association of Cannabis Tourism (NACT), for example, is an organization with the aim of promoting a sustainable and ethical tourism industry-related to cannabis in Canada. The organization brings together industry stakeholders in encouraging positive dialogue and change at all levels of government. Industry leader Brian Applegarth (2020b) sees these large organizing associations as “lending credibility to cannabis tourism as an industry.”

Discussion

The adoption of cannabis as a resource by the tourism industry facilitates normalization in several ways that have yet to be examined in tourism or normalization literatures. In what follows, several elements of the normalizing framework presented by Kolar et al. (2018) are used to conceptualize cannabis tourism as: (1) facilitating the accessibility, availability, and prevalence of cannabis in everyday life; (2) encouraging tolerance among users and nonusers through experiences and knowledge; and (3) enabling the social and cultural accommodation of cannabis. This framework is an updated

version of the indicators of normalization offered by Parker et al. (2002).

Accessibility, Availability, & Prevalence

By way of retail, tourism is part of the normalized supply of cannabis. Retail stores in and of themselves are indicative of an “intent to supply,” which is a key measure of normalization (Parker et al., 2002). The widespread accessibility and availability of cannabis is an indication of a recreational substance becoming an increasingly common aspect of life among cannabis consumers and nonconsumers (Aldridge et al., 2011; Duff et al., 2012). Increasing the availability and accessibility of cannabis to tourists by way of retail locations and/or tours facilitates the ease through which regulated cannabis is accessed by both domestic and international tourists. It also supports the objectives of the Cannabis Act, which include redirecting focus and resources from criminal prohibition to governmental regulation, as well as minimizing the associated harms with the illicit market (Cannabis Act, 2018). In partnership with storefronts, tour companies play an important role in connecting tourists to retail locations and increasing the accessibility and availability of the normalized supply of legal cannabis.

An entire industry exists wherein cannabis is utilized as a resource in the development of recreational, leisure, and/or wellness designed to accommodate tourists. The diverse ways in which cannabis is integrated into tourism products, services, and experiences, and the increasingly growing range of choice when it comes to cannabis tourism experiences lends legitimacy to cannabis use as appropriate, and even desirable, in many contexts. This is similar to the way a diverse array of cannabis products is indicative of the extent to which assumptions about cannabis as deviant need reconsideration given the broader societal changes surrounding the plant (Duff et al., 2012). Legalization increases the accessibility and availability of cannabis and are important indicators of normalization (Parker et al., 2002). The increased varieties of cannabis products as well as the incorporation of cannabis into any number of tourism experiences, similarly, reflects a normalizing trend.

In addition to the availability of cannabis itself, the availability of different types of education

around cannabis as well as the spaces in which it is consumed are also facilitated by tourism, all of which work to increase the prevalence of cannabis in everyday life. Tourism is a platform for education in which to share knowledge about growing the plant, understanding how cannabis interacts with the body, how to purchase legal cannabis, the different product types/cannabis forms available, how to consume/the different ways to consume cannabis, as well as the cultural context surrounding cannabis in different locations. Sharing information with family and friends on how to purchase legal cannabis in a retail store, for example, demonstrates the normalizing power of social interactions (Misztal, 2001) in the context of tourism. Similar to the way normalization incorporates stigmatized individuals into many features of everyday life (Parker, 2005), the stigmatized behavior of purchasing cannabis is re-coded through tourism. The knowledge of how to purchase legal cannabis at a retail store is part of the normalized supply of cannabis as is the ease of the relationship between customer and sales person. Normalization requires an understanding that the transaction between those who supply cannabis and those who purchase cannabis is one that reinforces nondeviant perceptions (Coomber et al., 2016). Tourism reinforces the “appearance of normality” (Hathaway et al., 2018) in the way that it constructs the purchase of cannabis as normal, which is then incorporated as valuable information into everyday life.

Several other examples demonstrate how tourism facilitates education around cannabis. Knowledgeable and experienced retail staff, also referred to as “budtenders,” are available to educate customers about different strains and their effects. Lounge employees provide instructions to patrons on how to use more complicated devices like a vaporizer. Tour guides offer a wealth of information on a broad range of topics and encourage guests to ask questions and take advantage of their expertise. “Bud and breakfast” operators are a direct link to the area’s cannabis scene and can connect guests to the culture of place. In all of these examples, tourism highlights that normalization includes the increase in accessibility to and availability of information and knowledge that surround the plant in addition to being able to access the plant itself.

Spaces of cannabis consumption are also made accessible and available through tourism, not only to those who consume, but also to nonconsumers. The establishment of legal spaces where cannabis can be purchased and consumed are important resources for both the tourism and cannabis industries. Lounges, for example, are a tourism-related offering that strengthens the relationship between cannabis consumption and leisure activities. They are also important spaces in which the social, economic and cultural reproduction of normal cannabis use takes place. Constructing what is normal in tourism related contexts points to the broader role tourism plays in the formation of public policy around cannabis consumption in public spaces.

Tolerance Through Experiences and Knowledge

Increasing the tolerance of consumers and nonconsumers through experiences and knowledge is a characteristic of normalization (Kolar et al., 2018). The education and experiences offered by several types of tourism-related businesses, including lounges, tours, and competitions, are identified by their owners, operators, and organizers as targeting both consumers and nonconsumers of cannabis. The increased visibility of cannabis culture provided by tourism-related businesses is one way of achieving greater tolerance in that it offers an education to the non-cannabis consumer with respect to cannabis consumption. In bringing groups of strangers together around a single focus (i.e., cannabis), this demonstrates how cannabis tourism is “an early form of the public production of cannabis culture” (Keul & Eisenhauer, 2019, p. 149).

Tourism also offers opportunities for education outside of consumptive activities. In several instances, tourism provides “points of exposure” for nonconsumers to consider tolerance and acceptance of cannabis use. Production facilities are a good example of a cannabis tourism attraction where the primary experience with the plant revolves around learning and education. Consumer trade shows are also nonconsumptive events that offer opportunities for nonconsumers of cannabis, the cannabis cautious, or the cannabis curious to be exposed to education about cannabis without necessarily having to consume it, be exposed to consumption, or purchase it. This connection is significant

because education and changing attitudes is part of the social accommodation of sensible recreational cannabis use, especially by nonusers (Parker et al., 2002). It also points to the importance of considering educational activities not related to the purchase or consumption of cannabis in definitions of cannabis tourism.

Social Accommodation

Tourism facilitates social accommodation by imposing an acceptable order on cannabis and its recreational consumption. According to Goffman (1983), order is maintained through activities that foster feelings of certainty, familiarity, and safety. Rules are key to creating a collective sense of predictability, reliability, and legibility that reduce the complexity of a situation by relaying shared understandings of the generalized expectations of social behavior for a situation (Hathaway et al., 2018; Misztal, 2001). In the context of cannabis, to follow the rules is to engage in normal behavior (Dickinson & Jacques, 2021). Tourism is a social institution with rules, codes of conduct, and behavioral expectations (Barley & Tolbert, 1997) and, especially in relation to cannabis, has the ability to influence interactions between people, organizations, and social actors in accordance with legal, normalized, and moral assumptions. In fact, “cannabis tourism is practiced through a set of common experiences which are reproduced across businesses” (Keul & Eisenhauer, 2019, p. 154). Setting standards of acceptability is a feature associated with normalization (Duff & Erickson, 2014). Tourism sets the standards and morals surrounding the appropriate etiquette and behavior in contexts where cannabis is available. The rules and etiquette emerging from cannabis tourism are social and structural dimensions of normalizing cannabis.

Several examples demonstrate how tourism creates order around cannabis. Cannabis tours in partnership with retail locations create order around the purchase of legal cannabis that reduces the perceived complexity of an unfamiliar social practice. Likewise, lounges create a socially acceptable order around cannabis consumption that reduces risk and promotes safety. The label “cannabis friendly” conveys a message about what type of behaviors and practices are acceptable in an accommodation

setting. In each of these circumstances, tourism organizes cannabis use by setting the standards for responsible and sensible consumption and directing consumption to the places, times, and circumstances that are deemed appropriate. Importantly, disapproval of problematic cannabis consumption as well as being conscious of potential harms of use are features of normalization (Duff & Erickson, 2014) that are evident in a shared understanding of cannabis tourism among suppliers. Normalcy is achieved through such shared understandings that contribute to expectations of social behavior during these times and at these places (Hathaway et al., 2018).

Cultural Accommodation

The ability of tourism to accommodate a cultural shift in meaning is highlighted by legal contexts that support the legitimacy of cannabis as a resource for tourism. As identified by Keul and Eisenhauer (2019), understanding changes in the law and the economic response to those changes are key to illustrating the production of touristed spaces. Interest in cannabis as a legitimate economic opportunity, in general, signifies normalization as does the emergence of professionally managed businesses that provide services around it (Hathaway et al., 2011), like tourism. Businesses that offer opportunities to experience place by incorporating recreational cannabis consumption are part of a normalizing process that work to re-define the perceptions surrounding cannabis. Like in Colorado, the emerging supply of cannabis-related tourism activities and amenities in Canada suggests businesses are capitalizing on an emerging demand for new experiences, which are only likely to increase as attitudes become more open towards cannabis consumption as a recreational activity (Kang et al., 2016).

The largely socially accepted status of tourism offers credibility to cannabis consumption as a recreational activity in which people engage in their free time. Tourism is a well-established social institution and the industry's acknowledgment that cannabis is a resource for recreation and leisure is a sign of social tolerance that undermines associations with deviancy and lends legitimacy to standards of acceptability around consumption. The "cultural consensus" (Duff et al., 2012) of cannabis tourism

suppliers represents a shared series of norms, values, and practices that reflect a "common-sense" understanding of cannabis and cannabis consumption that shapes the way it is used by consumers to maximize benefits, comfort, and safety while minimizing the associated risks. The activities and spaces around which cannabis is organized by tourism suppliers shapes the production of a legalized cannabis culture (Keul & Eisenhauer, 2019).

As a "cultural cognitive system" (Hathaway et al., 2016), tourism generates shared meanings that are a source of legitimacy and offers a way to assess how the realities of recreational cannabis consumption are accommodated for in cultural understandings of normality. Similar to Canadian media, such as film, television, and music that represent cannabis in mainstream formats (Gruber et al., 2005; Primack et al., 2008) tourism also reinterprets an historically stigmatized substance as socially and culturally valued. As represented by supplier perspectives, cannabis tourism works to unravel stigma and make cannabis more common (Keul & Eisenhauer, 2019). The erosion of stigma is a significant force of normalization (Hathaway, 2004) and the legalized context that influences a language distinguishing cannabis as nonthreatening (Dickenson & Jacques, 2021) is both leveraged and facilitated by tourism.

Conclusions

The purpose of this article is to show how the legalization of recreational cannabis in Canada opens up opportunities for tourism, and in doing so plays a role in normalizing processes that are part of a broader social shift that sets cannabis apart from framings as a deviant drug in the tourism literature. Normalization is helpful for societies that are committed to social inclusion and a "pro-active approach to recognizing that social policy and laws must adapt to social and cultural change" (Parker et al., 2002, p. 943). Insight into understanding what normalization looks like in a federally legal space is provided by illustrating the ways in which cannabis is utilized as a resource for tourism. The incorporation of cannabis into services, attractions, and/or amenities in Canada's tourism industry is evidence of the changing attitudes towards cannabis and its "sensible" recreational consumption where

it becomes accepted and embedded into already existing social practices.

Understanding how cannabis is a resource for tourism is significant for illustrating how a once highly demonized and secretive substance gets reframed as a feature, or attraction, that is embraced and celebrated by, and sold to, the public. Tourism places cannabis into full public view, giving it greater visibility as a legitimate recreational resource. In doing so, it calls into question the framing of cannabis as deviant in the tourism literature and highlights the need for establishing cannabis tourism as a category set apart from “drug use.” As Lashley and Pollock (2020) suggested, “part of the process for reducing a category’s stigma can involve establishing a new category” (p. 439). The ways in which cannabis is utilized as a resource in legal contexts justifies the application of cannabis tourism as having its own label, separate from drug tourism.

Future research in cannabis tourism can take any number of directions. First, more research is needed in refining definitions of cannabis tourism. Although purchasing and/or consuming while on vacation are types of “cannabis experiences,” the definition of “cannabis experience” needs to be broadened to include educational activities at places where tourists neither consume nor purchase cannabis. To date, definitions of cannabis tourism are consumption centered. However, given the role growers play in offering tourism experiences through educational and learning components, cannabis tourism needs to be considered with respect to including nonconsumptive elements. The literature would benefit from research that investigates the tourist’s understanding of what constitutes a cannabis tourism experience in establishing a definition of cannabis tourism. Of interest to geographers is how the material attractions and amenities on the landscape that are part of the cannabis tourism industry implicate space. Tourism lends to the analysis of how normalization is a spatial process and research is necessary to better understand the spatial elements of cannabis normalization in the context of tourism. A spatial approach potentially offers a way to build on and strengthen normalization theory.

Given the importance of networks in wine tourism (Telfer, 2001), it is reasonable to assume that

similar business-to-business relationships will be of equal importance to the cannabis tourism industry. Describing the functional linkages among the various components of the supply chain and exploration of the basic relationships and issues experienced by specific types of tourism producers is fertile ground for future study. Also of interest from the supply side perspective are explorations of best practices among cannabis tourism suppliers with respect to the social responsibility exercised in keeping cannabis tourists safe while on vacation in Canada.

Cannabis legalization in Canada has created a new landscape for tourism. Given the recency of changes made to the law, this article serves in understanding and documenting the early era of the legalized cannabis tourism market in Canada. In doing so, it demonstrates how social practices related to recreation and leisure create new ideas around cannabis and illustrates the value tourism offers in the study of emerging norms and customs of a once highly stigmatized plant. Finally, this article serves as a foundation for establishing a future research agenda that potentially offers a diverse range of study to better understand cannabis tourism as it emerges in Canada and in other legal contexts abroad.

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