

Enhancing Art Gallery Visibility and Public Engagement Through Strategic Outreach Programs in Klang Valley

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ABSTRACT

Art galleries are one of the important institutions in preserving and promoting the various local artworks. The Klang Valley area is an area that is a site for the development of art activities and programs, such as art exhibitions and art activities to foster art awareness in the community. However, in recent years, galleries in the Klang Valley have faced several challenges including the public engagement in art gallery. This study was conducted to explore how strategic outreach programs can increase the visibility and public engagement of art galleries. The main objective of this study is to identify how outreach programs can enhance public engagement and visibility of art galleries in the Klang Valley. This study uses a qualitative method that includes observation and interviews with experts, while secondary data was obtained from library research. The New Museology Theory will be used in this study that focuses on community engagement. The findings of this study are that outreach programs can enhance public engagement. The study also benefits art galleries, arts and cultural agencies, government and non-government bodies (NGOs) and the local community. This study is important to understand how outreach programs can enhance visibility and public engagement of art galleries in the Klang Valley.

Keywords: Art gallery, outreach programs, Klang Valley, public engagement



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1 INTRODUCTION

An art gallery is a place that nurtures visual artists, promotes their artwork to the public and provides education to the public and exposes it to art collectors, media and cultural institutions (Glimcher, 2022). Besides that, an art gallery is an institution that provides exhibition space that displays and sells artists' artworks, but each gallery offers different services since not all galleries are the same (Delagrang, 2024). According to Glimcher (2022), an art gallery should have a strategic plan in developing and promoting artists' careers by providing good and suitable exhibition space, administrative and curatorial staff, insurance, involvement with art festivals and producing good events.

Based on the website of the National Art Gallery, Malaysia Art Trail (n.d), there are twenty art galleries, studios and residencies in Kuala Lumpur and twenty art galleries, studios and residencies in Selangor. The mapping of art galleries, studios and residencies through the Malaysia Art Trail by the National Art Gallery creates strong data in the network of visual art ecosystems in the Klang Valley. Malaysia Art Trail also identifies an art ecosystem where the presence of operational and art management services is directly and indirectly involved in the country's visual art platform

Art galleries and museums also face several challenges. According to Smith (2023), mainstream museums still face challenges with community involvement because they still prioritise the study, display and preservation of objects without the involvement of the community around them. Among

the ways to promote local artists and foster a sustainable art culture, community involvement is very important by involving community participation in every art activity, thus it can drive economic benefits and create relationships between artists and communities (Artist Sunday, 2024).

Many art galleries have been established especially in the Klang Valley area such as Ilham Gallery, G13 Gallery, Segaris Art Gallery, Shah Alam Gallery and others. However, these galleries face challenges that will affect the operational functions. A significant challenge that can be seen is the involvement of the audience in the art gallery. The success of an art gallery is not only in the context of the exhibition but the number and involvement of visitors. According to A Canvas Gathering Dust (2024) in the article Reviving Art Appreciation in Malaysia, it is evidenced by a very significant decline in public involvement and interest in art exhibitions where the National Art Gallery is struggling to attract visitors and causing a reduction in visitors to the largest visual arts institution in Malaysia and effected on visitor involvement and future audience development in the context of art appreciation in this country.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Role of Art Galleries

The evolution of art galleries reflects a continuing transformation in the way societies collect, display and interpret visual culture, which is constantly changing. The earliest manifestations of galleries that can be identified with the focus on private collections of elites during the Renaissance age, particularly in the form of ‘studioli’ and cabinets that created curiosity. These spaces were not focused on public access and were open to the public but functioned as exclusive environments intended for intellectual inquiry and social distinction. As Haskell (2000) points out in his book, *The Ephemeral Museum*, such private collecting practices were one of the foundations for shaping and building an institutionalisation of art in the context of early public museums.

The understanding marked a critical turning point in this trajectory. It was characterised by the rise of public galleries, reflecting broader democratic ideals and a growing interest in making art accessible to a wider and more unrestricted public. This shift from private to public display marked a redefinition of the function of the gallery as a social and cultural institution. It could be more closely aligned with educational and civic objectives. Many scholars and professional museum educators agree that the presence of gallery activities will create a very meaningful experience in museums and art galleries, and it is very important for collecting data on collaborative activities that can help educators in meeting their goals (Nfp, 2019)

Art galleries provide many facilities to visitors where they are allowed to bring pencils and paper to draw their own sketches by clearly seeing the works on display, and in the art gallery, they also provide activities that explore paintings and sculptures, and art galleries have also provided many activity programs for children and families (Zouwer, 2023). According to Zaine (2023), Segaris Art Centre provides a variety of art activities where the art gallery provides art seminars and art workshops in the gallery to create a relationship between the gallery, art and the community, as well as providing opportunities for artists to share stories and experiences in the production of their artwork.

2.2 Developing Outreach Gallery

Outreach and collaboration programs are currently being actively carried out by many art galleries in order to promote their art galleries as well as help in maintaining their operations. Such activities have a positive impact on the gallery itself. If the gallery has just been established, such a program can give awareness to the community, art lovers, art sellers, and new or old artists about the existence of this art gallery.

The collaborative education and outreach program is one of the visions that fulfils the vision of

community groups and has the potential to increase the number of new groups with this collaborative program (Reid, 2007). In addition, museum and gallery outreach programs can have a positive impact on the community by expanding the gallery network to all locations, collaborating and sharing narratives, being spontaneous, open-minded and never stopping to continue relationships, collaboration and communication (Ziska, 2024).

2.3 Educational Activities of Art Gallery and Museum

Activities and programs at the art gallery not only focus on art but also aim at educational activities that bring a positive impact to the gallery itself. According to Stepanskaya (2016), the educational activities carried out are very helpful in popularising museums or art galleries in the way of museums and art galleries. This means, an art gallery or museum can carry out any activity in the gallery's own way. Art galleries act as institutions that nurture visual artists, promote their work, and expose their artwork to the public, collectors, media and cultural institutions (Glimcher, 2022).

Next, the presence of visitors to art galleries is not only to admire, appreciate and enjoy the artworks on display but they are present for the offer of educational activities organised by art galleries where the program provides opportunities for visitors and the community to learn more about art through activities such as seminars, art workshops and visits (Saxena, 2023). According to Tlili (2024), education in art galleries must have unique characteristics and interpretations to carry out the operation of art gallery educational activities, which will create different learning values for the community and participants from various fields that can produce benefits for participants in art gallery education.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To obtain more accurate data, this study uses a qualitative approach. The researcher used the observation approach as one of the methods in this study. In addition, the researcher used this method to observe the outreach programs and activities that have been carried out by each selected institution and organisation from 2022 to 2024. This year's selection was to see how these three art gallery institutions were able to survive after the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world. In addition, this method was used to see how outreach programs can generate public engagement and visibility of art galleries in the Klang Valley.

Next, interviews are conversational methods used to collect data and information. This study interview will involve the researcher as the interviewer and the interviewee as the respondent to the researcher's research questions. Interviews can be conducted not only in person, face to face, but can also be conducted through any platform such as Google Meet, Zoom, messages and other platforms that are considered appropriate. The researcher conducted the research at the Bank Negara Malaysia Museum and Art Gallery located at Sasana Kijang. The researcher obtained information and data related to the strategic outreach program used in the art gallery operations at Bank Negara. In addition, the data also came from the National Art Gallery, which is one of the art galleries that actively organises art programs and activities throughout Malaysia. Finally, the researcher also obtained information and data at the Shah Alam Gallery, which is an art organisation that has been operating for 34 years and is active in conducting outreach programs around Shah Alam and abroad.

Table 1 Population and sample selection

| Research Objective | Interviewees |
|---|---|
| To identify how outreach programs can enhance public engagement and visibility of art galleries in the Klang Valley | 1. Noreen Zulkepli, Director of Bank Negara Malaysia Museum and Art Gallery |
| | 2. Syahrul Niza Ahmad Zaini, Curator of National Art Gallery |
| | 3. Muhd Minsya Baharudin, Assistan Curator, Shah Alam Gallery |

4 FINDINGS

The role of an art gallery in its operation is not only seen in terms of exhibition activities, but it is more than that. Art galleries in Klang Valley play an important role in the arts ecosystem in Malaysia since it is one of the focal points for art exhibition activities and arts programs in Malaysia. There are many art galleries established in the area, including art galleries under the auspices of the government, state government, commercial and private. The function of these galleries is not only to manage exhibitions and sales of artworks but also functions as an informal educational institution in art and culture.

The role of art galleries in conducting outreach programs helps in increasing public involvement and visibility of art galleries to the local community and abroad as well as in generating sustainability of art galleries. National Art Gallery, Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery Malaysia and Shah Alam Gallery are among the art galleries that use outreach programs as one of the initiatives to increase public involvement and visibility of art galleries to the local community in the state or abroad as well as in ensuring the sustainability of art gallery operations

Peter Vergo, in his book *The New Museology* (1989), redefines how museums function as one of the institutions that provides a space for engagement, inclusiveness and shared power. Where the theory urges them (museums and galleries) to actively involve the public in the process of interpretation, dialogue and cultural representation. Thus, it is proven that the operation of the gallery is not only limited to displaying objects, but it should be a centre for general engagement.

4.1 Outreach Programs That Can Enhance Public Engagement and Visibility of The Art Gallery in Klang Valley

4.1.1 Shah Alam Gallery

According to Minsya Baharudin (2025), Shah Alam Gallery has planned and produced many outreach programs that have had a very positive impact on the organisation. Shah Alam Gallery's outreach program is designed not only to foster interest and develop non-formal educational activities, but it has also had a very big impact on the gallery. Among the outreach programs that have been carried out by Shah Alam Gallery are International Exhibitions, art workshops, art carnivals, community programs, international visits and educational programs.

This outreach program has been actively carried out since the establishment of Shah Alam Gallery under the support of Selangor Darul Ehsan Art Foundation. This international exhibition program is often carried out with collaborative partners. This international exhibition is often held at Shah Alam Gallery, where it has increased the visibility of Shah Alam Gallery on an international level.

According to Minsya Baharudin (2025), the objectives of Shah Alam Gallery's outreach program are not only tied to the visibility of Shah Alam Gallery but also play an important role in public engagement, since this outreach program will have a positive impact on public engagement. Among the outreach programs that are often practised by the Shah Alam Gallery are art workshops and community programs. According to Minsya Baharudin (2025), art workshops and community programs are one of the programs that the Shah Alam Gallery often holds to increase public engagement and the visibility of the Shah Alam Gallery not only in the Klang Valley area but also outside the state of Selangor.

These art workshops and community programs can not only increase public involvement but will create a relationship between the art gallery itself and the public and can also create a collaborative relationship between other agencies. Among the art workshops that Shah Alam Gallery often conducts are Painting Art Workshops, Watercolour Art Workshops, Photography Art Workshops and Performance Art Workshops. These art workshops were not only held inside the gallery, but they were also held outside the Shah Alam Gallery area in collaboration with artists, art institutions and non-art

agencies. Apart from that, this outreach program has increased the visibility of the Shah Alam Gallery widely.

Educational programs are also able to increase public involvement and the visibility of the Shah Alam Gallery. The gallery holds many educational programs in schools, higher education institutions and non-art NGOs. Such programs were seen to be able to increase the visibility of the Shah Alam Gallery widely. This program will provide exposure to institutions about the arts while introducing the Shah Alam Gallery as one of the arts organisations.

Among the educational programs under the Shah Alam Gallery were art visits and workshops to schools and higher education institutions. This educational program was not only held in the Shah Alam area, but it was also wider. According to Minsya Baharudin (2025), such programs have increased the visibility of the Shah Alam Gallery and indirectly have created public involvement.



Figure 1 Clay Art Workshop by Shah Alam Gallery

(Source: Shah Alam Gallery Instagram, 2025, Copyright Consent: Permissible to Publish)

Apart from that, the art carnival is also one of the Shah Alam Gallery's outreach programs in increasing public involvement. Shah Alam Gallery holds an art carnival program 1 or 2 times a year. Although the number is small, the impact on Shah Alam Gallery is very large. Among the examples of this art carnival program is the Arts Education Carnival, which was organised physically and virtually and has increased the visibility of Shah Alam Gallery to Sabah and Sarawak.

This outreach program has had a positive impact on public involvement, especially school students, local communities and college students. According to Minsya Baharudin (2025), the art carnival program is one of the very effective programs for Shah Alam Gallery and art galleries in the Klang Valley in increasing public involvement and the visibility of the gallery itself.



Figure 2 Batik Fun Run outreach collaboration programs

(Source: Shah Alam Gallery Instagram, 2024, Copyright Consent: Permissible to Publish)

According to Minsya Baharudin (2025), collaboration between other agencies in outreach programs can also increase public involvement and visibility of this organisation. Shah Alam Gallery has collaborated a lot with art agencies such as the National Art Gallery, Higher Education Institutions, which are focused on the Faculty of Arts, art associations, arts and non-art NGOs and at the international level. Outreach programs such as international tours and art carnivals can increase the visibility of Shah Alam Gallery with this collaboration.

4.1.2 Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery

In addition, the Bank Negara Malaysia Museum and Art Gallery, located in Sasana Kijang, also holds many outreach programs that increase public involvement and the visibility of the art gallery throughout the region and country. According to Noreen Zulkepli (2025), as Director of the Bank Negara Malaysia Museum and Art Gallery, they also use outreach programs as one of their initiatives in increasing visibility and public involvement. According to Noreen Zulkepli (2025), the Bank Negara Art Gallery is one of the art galleries under the government, where their objective is to promote the country's visual arts and provide education and awareness to the community.

The Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery participate in and holds many outreach programs to increase the visibility and public engagement of its art gallery. Among the outreach programs that have impacted the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery is their participation in International Museum Day. According to Noreen Zulkepli (2025), this International Museum Day program has greatly helped the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery in showcasing its art gallery to the world. Many art galleries and museums from different states and countries have participated in the program. Community involvement is also very encouraging and has increased public and community engagement between the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery.

The participation of the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery in this International Museum Day not only provides exposure to museums and art to the local and international community, but is also able to strengthen the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery's collaborative network with other museums from within the country and abroad. This International Museum Day is celebrated every year at the global level, and it is a very important platform for the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery to highlight their organisation and role, which not only focuses on exhibitions but also as agents of education, heritage and culture.



Figure 3 International Museum Day (Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery)
(Source: Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery Instagram, 2024,
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In addition, through participation in this International Museum Day, the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery have showcased the visual art works of local artists and introduced Malaysian visual art and culture to the global community. The effectiveness of this program is proven by the significant increase in the involvement of various communities in general. According to Noreen Zulkepli (2025), the response from the involvement of various communities shows that the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery's initiative to move beyond the physical exhibition space is one of the most appropriate steps in increasing public involvement of the community and the visibility of the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery.

Participation in this International Museum Day also helps to open opportunities for the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery to build and further strengthen their reputation and visibility at the international level. The involvement of art galleries in outreach programs, whether conducted by themselves or not, is one of the strategic and effective steps to increase the visibility of art galleries and public involvement. It is also able to further strengthen the role of art galleries as one of the institutions that serve as a link between art, society and the outside world.

Besides that, the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery also conduct educational programs in schools and higher education institutions. This approach is one of its strategic plans to increase visibility and public engagement. According to Noreen Zulkepli (2025), this educational program is one of the outreach programs actively carried out by the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery to assist the art gallery in increasing the visibility of the organisation.

This educational program has also produced many positive impacts on the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery, with the existence of clubs in Malay schools since it is also included in the primary school education syllabus. This educational program also involves art workshops, art talks and several travelling exhibitions that increase public engagement. This program also provides an opportunity for the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery to establish new collaborative relationships with schools, higher education institutions and external agencies.



Figure 4 Children's Festival by Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery
(Source: Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery Instagram, 2024,
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In addition, an outreach program that can increase public engagement and visibility of the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery is the mobile exhibition program. This mobile exhibition is a program specially designed by the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery to bring out the visual art works to be exhibited at strategic locations throughout the country. This mobile exhibition was carried out at outdoor programs, schools, universities and colleges, libraries and even in public areas.

According to Noreen Zulkepli (2025), the mobile exhibition is one of the outreach programs that is often carried out by the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery to increase the visibility of the gallery throughout the country. Among the advantages of this mobile exhibition is that it can expand the reach of the gallery. This mobile exhibition provides an opportunity for people outside the area who do not have the opportunity to visit the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery physically. With this, the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery take steps to bring art to them, thereby expanding the reach of visitors and the visibility of the gallery.

Apart from that, this mobile exhibition is also able to increase the visibility and brand of the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery. This mobile exhibition is strategically planned to introduce the name and identity of the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery to the outside community. This outreach program builds the brand and visibility of the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery's role as a leading national art institution.

Furthermore, this mobile exhibition also actively increases public engagement due to its ability to attract the interest of various age groups and backgrounds of the community who visit this mobile exhibition. This mobile exhibition is enhanced with side programs such as educational programs, art workshops and art talks. This will further increase the visibility and public engagement opportunities.

In addition, the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery also conduct visits to community centres, zoos and hospitals as one of the strategic outreach programs that increase the visibility of the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery and public engagement. According to Noreen Zulkepli (2025), this outreach program will help the art gallery to further expand its reach to all institutions, whereby it does not only focus on art agencies. It will expand to all other agencies which will increase the visibility of

the Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery.

4.1.3 National Art Gallery

According to Syahrul Niza Ahmad Zaini (2025), Curator of the National Art Gallery, the approach to the outreach program used by the National Art Gallery is quite different. The approach used is more about direct community involvement in art, artist involvement and international involvement. The outreach program conducted by the gallery was more about increasing public involvement and the visibility of their art gallery. The planned outreach program is one approach that has an impact in bringing art closer to the entire community.

Among the outreach programs carried out was the Art Village program. This outreach program was a program that involved the participation of artists and communities in a rural area and village. There are many activities such as art workshops, art demonstrations, cultural activities and village activities that directly involve the participation of artists, galleries and the community around the area. This outreach program not only increased the visibility of the role of the National Art Gallery, but the program strengthened the relationship between the gallery and the community. In addition, this outreach program encouraged community participation in art activities as well as increased their understanding and interest in visual art activities in rural areas.

Next, outreach programs involving artists and the community are also one of the approaches of the National Art Gallery in increasing public involvement, namely the art program with artists and the community. According to Syahrul Niza Ahmad Zaini (2025), this outreach program has opened many opportunities for artists and galleries to engage with the community. The program involved art activities such as murals, art workshops and art talks. Each art talk was supplemented with several other activities to attract the community to participate in all art activities held by galleries and artists. Programs like this will have an impact on reducing the gap between artists and the public. In addition, this program has increased the visibility of the National Art Gallery widely and not limited to the local community.

Apart from that, outreach programs such as the Malaysian Art Trail were also one of the approaches of the National Art Gallery in increasing visibility. This outreach program is one of the different programs since it was one of the special projects of the National Art Gallery in exploring the mapping of the art ecosystem in Malaysia. This project was a process of collecting data and identifying public works, art alleys, art associations, galleries, studios and others. Additionally, this program also helped galleries and artists who are far away to get to know the National Art Gallery more closely. This program has indirectly increased the visibility of the National Art Gallery in other locations.



Figure 5 *Perkampungan Seni* by National Art Gallery (Source: National Art Gallery Facebook, 2023, Copyright Consent: Permissible to Publish)

Moreover, the National Art Gallery is also active in outreach programs involving international activities. The organisation of National Art Gallery's international programs in art programs such as biennales, overseas exhibitions, activities and programs involving international and local artists has increased the visibility of the institution at the international level. This outreach program also provides an opportunity for galleries to introduce their role abroad while providing an opportunity for artists to engage with new communities there. This international program can also help artists in deepening and improving their visual arts experience and skills at the global level.

The National Art Gallery also uses an approach by organising various types of art carnivals. This large-scale outreach program will combine various art activities that increase public involvement widely. Other than that, programs like this will also increase the visibility of the National Art Gallery throughout the region. Among the activities carried out in this carnival program are art workshops, educational programs, travelling exhibitions, fashion competitions, art performances and interactive activities. According to Syahrul Niza Ahmad Zaini (2025), art carnivals such as Merdeka Reka Cipta were one of the successful programs.



Figure 6 Community programs by the National Art Gallery
(Source: National Art Gallery Facebook, Copyright Consent: Permissible to Publish)

The National Art Gallery organises and participates in many outreach programs, which play a very important role in increasing the gallery's visibility and public engagement. To ensure the effectiveness of these outreach programs to the community and institutions, there are several strategic and systematic approaches used by the National Art Gallery. One way in which the National Art Gallery identifies the target audiences for each outreach program is by looking at community engagement. The gallery designs outreach programs based on specific needs and groups to increase the effectiveness of the program.

Among the communities that are often involved in events and activities are children and adults. The outreach program that is designed should have different appeals to ensure that these groups can engage with the activities comprehensively. Children's activities focus on art workshops, drawing competitions and interactive activities. Adult activities include art talks, guided tours, community art workshops and art activities that involve art awareness. The effectiveness of the program is very important to ensure that the art gallery continues to receive comprehensive public involvement.

5 CONCLUSION

This study aims to achieve the goal of how to enhance visibility and public engagement of art galleries in the Klang Valley through strategic outreach programs. Klang Valley is one of the locations that has become a catalyst for the visual arts movement in Malaysia. However, several art galleries cannot survive due to several challenges and constraints faced in the management of art gallery operations.

The first analysis summarises and includes outreach programs that can enhance public engagement and visibility of art galleries in the Klang Valley. This analysis was conducted using interview data held at the National Art Gallery, Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery and Shah Alam Gallery. These three art galleries are active in organising various outreach programs that can increase public engagement and the visibility of their art galleries. This analysis found that these three art galleries under the government are also facing sustainability challenges.

Various outreach programs were held by the three institutions, such as art carnivals, art workshops, travelling exhibitions, educational programs and community programs. These programs have had a positive impact on the art galleries to continue to remain relevant and sustainable. National Art Gallery, Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery and Shah Alam Gallery focus on programs such as educational programs in schools, universities and strategic areas that are difficult to access. In addition, the National

Art Gallery and Bank Negara Museum and Art Gallery Malaysia also organise travelling exhibitions in areas that are the focus of outreach programs. Both art galleries also participate in the International Museum Day program to increase the visibility of art galleries internationally. Shah Alam Gallery organises more programs in the form of art workshops and art carnivals that can increase interaction and participation in community involvement, as well as increase the visibility of this organisation.

The success of this outreach program has had a positive impact on the increase in the number of visitors to the gallery and has improved the public engagement and visibility of the organisation. The success of this outreach program has also strengthened the collaborative network and has produced strategic relationships that help in improving the outreach programs of art galleries. Outreach programs involving travelling exhibitions, community programs, art carnivals and art workshops have proven that art galleries are more community-friendly and close to the community. Every outreach program organised should be improved to ensure that the program remains relevant through an approach of investing in exhibition technology and activities and more flexible programs. This effort can strengthen the image of art galleries as sustainable institutions, safeguard the country's artistic heritage and become a catalyst for the development of national culture and arts education.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Both authors contributed equally.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The researchers declare no conflict of interest.

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