

Creativity in Tourism Institutions as an Entry Point for Enhancing the Competitive Advantage in the Tourism Sector: A Case Study of Travel Agencies in Ain Defla Province

الإبداع في المؤسسات السياحية كمدخل لتدعيم الميزة التنافسية بالقطاع السياحي: دراسة حالة للوكالات السياحية بولاية عين الدفلى

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Received: 28.10.2023

Accepted: 04.02.2024

Published: 06.07.2024

Abstract: This study aims to identify the role of creativity in strengthening and developing the competitive advantage of tourism institutions, using a survey study of active travel agencies in Ain Defla Province. The study found that travel agencies seek to improve their market position and enhance their competitiveness by adopting creativity in their products. This is achieved through internal development and diversification of services, in order to gain additional competitive advantages to face direct competition. The study recommends the importance of market research to identify available opportunities, exploit them, differentiate from competitors, and provide high-quality services.

Keywords: Innovation; Creativity; Competitive Advantage; Travel Agency.

JelClassificationCodes: L83, O31, Z39, Z32.

مستخلص: تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة دور الإبداع في تدعيم وتنمية الميزة التنافسية للمؤسسات السياحية، باستخدام الدراسة المسحية للوكالات الناشطة على مستوى ولاية عين الدفلى، حيث توصلت الدراسة إلى اتفاق المبحوثين بأن الوكالات السياحية تسعى إلى تحسين مكانتها في السوق وتعزيز تنافسيتها من خلال تبني الإبداع في منتجاتها، من خلال الاعتماد على التطوير الداخلي، تنوع تشكيلة خدماتها، من أجل كسب مزايا تنافسية أخرى لمواجهة المنافسة المباشرة. قد أوصت الدراسة بضرورة دراسة السوق من أجل التعرف على الفرص المتاحة واستغلالها والتميز عن المنافسين وتقديم خدمات راقية.

كلمات مفتاحية: الابتكار، الإبداع، الميزة التنافسية، الوكالة السياحية.

تصنيف JEL : L83, O31, Z39, Z32.

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1.INTRODUCTION:

The business environment has been characterized by instability and rapid change since the end of the last century, whether through the entry of new competitors or the exit of current competitors, changing consumer preferences, and shorter product life cycles. These factors contribute to product obsolescence and the rapid change of customer needs and desires. Consequently, it has become necessary for organizations to offer new products or adopt new production methods that meet consumer needs and increase productivity.

Therefore, Algerian institutions, especially in the tourism sector, find themselves compelled to search for mechanisms that help them maintain their position, ensure their continuous presence in the markets, and outperform their competitors. Thus, possessing a competitive advantage becomes crucial, and it requires exploring the sources of this advantage, which vary depending on the goals, capabilities, and nature of the institutions.

Currently, competition and services in many fields are driven by the element of creativity, which acts as a strong incentive for any organization to innovate and renew. This drives organizations to introduce new products, processes, or strategies that can often lead to significant profits. It can be said that creativity is the most secure strategic option for institutions and one of the most important fundamental pillars in building advantages for an organization. In other words, if an organization wants to keep up with the competitive race, it must take steps and measures to introduce products and services, develop existing products and services, or develop new techniques to produce these products and services confidently and at a low cost.

Studies have shown that innovative and creative activities are effective mechanisms for enhancing an organization's performance. They provide ideas and research that can be developed into new or improved products. Therefore, organizations should prioritize innovative and creative activities by focusing on

research and development as a means to create an organizational climate that facilitates the generation of creative ideas. Additionally, organizations are required to evaluate the creativity they introduce to determine its effectiveness.

Study problem:

Contemporary institutions today strive for excellence by achieving unprecedented results, bringing forth what is new, and focusing on creativity to surpass their competitors. In the face of intense competition in the business world, differentiation has become the only way to survive. Consequently, creativity has become of utmost importance as it plays a crucial role and yields positive outcomes for the benefit of institutions and their employees. It helps in identifying solutions, breaking away from conventional thinking, generating a significant number of ideas in less time and effort, and breaking barriers for employees while stimulating new ideas.

The problem of this study can be formulated in the following main question:

To what extent does creativity contribute to the development and enhancement of the competitive advantage of a tourism institution?

Study Hypothesis:

This study proceeds from the following main hypotheses:

- Creativity contributes to the strengthening and development of competitive advantages for a tourism institution.
- There is a significant correlation between creativity and competitive advantage in tourism agencies.

Study objectives:

The primary objective of this research is to explore the role of technological creativity in developing the competitive advantage of an economic institution.

This will be achieved by accomplishing the following objectives:

- Identifying the determinants of creativity at the level of the tourism institution and highlighting the role it plays.

- Developing recommendations and suggestions that can contribute to improving the performance of the tourism institution through the adoption of creativity.
- Understanding how to harness and disseminate creativity, raising awareness about its importance, and intensifying research efforts in this area.
- Promoting a culture of creativity within the tourism institution and demonstrating the extent of its contributions to the creation and development of the competitive advantage.

2. The Theoretical Framework of the Study:

2.1. Creativity:

The rapid changes in the economic environment in the fields of science, technology, globalization, and its challenges, along with changing customer demands and operating in unstable markets, alongside increased competition, have compelled institutions to improve their performance for the purpose of competition. This has made creativity one of the fundamental concepts in today's world and one of the most important requirements in contemporary management.

2.1.1. Concept of Creativity:

There are multiple concepts and varying perspectives on defining the nature of creativity. There is no agreement among scholars regarding its definition and nature, mainly due to the complexity of the creative phenomenon itself and the diverse fields in which the concept of creativity has spread. This has led to the diversity of theoretical approaches to the subject of creativity due to the variation in scholars' interpretations, their different interests, scientific methodologies, and intellectual schools of thought. Some of these definitions include:

- Gerard defines creativity as: "The art applied to any creative attempt, the process of embodying this attempt in reality, the material outcome of this process, and the evaluation of this outcome" (Ali, 2007, p. 23).

- Scientist Paul Torrance defines creativity as: "The scientific research process, which involves identifying problems, deficiencies, and knowledge gaps, as well as missing elements and inconsistencies, then identifying the difficulty and expressing its identity, then searching for solutions and making guesses or hypotheses, then selecting these hypotheses and formulating results and conveying them" (Almaghribi, 1995, p. 341).
- Guilford defines creativity as: "Readiness traits that include fluency, thinking, flexibility, originality, and sensitivity to problems, redefining and explaining the problem in detail" (Jarwan, 2002, p. 22).
- (Rawia, 2010) Views creativity as: "Possessing additional creative abilities such as a spirit of risk-taking, the ability to change and problem-solving."

2.1.2 Importance Creativity:

In the face of the changing circumstances experienced by institutions today, whether political, social, or cultural, it is imperative for them to respond to these changes in a creative manner. Creativity is considered a highly important factor for competition and vitality, leading institutions to focus on creativity. Its importance lies in the following aspects (Hussein, 2003):

- Creativity contributes to economic development by finding suitable methods, techniques, and technology that support development.
- It leads to continuous renewal and development, helping institutions, especially productive ones, to achieve sustainability and competitiveness in the market.
- Creativity helps in finding solutions to internal and external problems faced by institutions, contributing to the development and improvement of employees' skills and influencing their attitudes and behaviors.

2.1.3. Elements of Innovation:

There are various classifications by scholars and authors regarding the elements of innovation. Among these different elements, the following can be

mentioned:

- **Fluency:** It refers to the ability to generate a large number of ideas within a specific time frame. A creative individual excels in producing a significant quantity of ideas on a given topic in a fixed period compared to others. They possess a high capacity for generating ideas fluidly and effortlessly (Saraya, 2007, p. 167).
- **Problem Sensitivity:** It refers to the awareness of the existence of problems, needs, or weaknesses in the environment or situation. Some individuals are quicker than others in recognizing the problem and verifying its existence in a given situation. Discovering the problem is undoubtedly the first step in the process of finding a solution (Al-Lawzi, 2006, p. 29).
- **Flexibility:** It refers to the mental flexibility and ease with which an individual changes their mindset. It also denotes the ability to rapidly produce a greater number of different types of ideas related to a specific situation.
- **Risk-taking and Challenge:** It refers to the willingness to take risks associated with adopting new ideas or approaches and taking responsibility for their outcomes. This behavior is associated with the fundamental process of innovation, which involves identifying and supporting latent creative ideas and being willing to take risks in their pursuit (Mahdi, 2012, p. 02).
- **Breaking Conventions:** It refers to the ability to break free from traditional tendencies and common practices, and the capacity to deal with rigid systems and adapt them to the work reality. This requires a sufficient level of courage.
- **Originality:** It refers to the ability to produce unprecedented and unconventional ideas. A creative individual possesses original thinking

that diverges from the common or ordinary. It involves producing uncommon and far-reaching ideas (Al-Qairoti, 2003, p. 316).

These elements contribute to the overall understanding and manifestation of innovation.

2.1.4. Measuring Innovation and Its Dimensions and Barriers:

A. Measuring Innovation:

The measures of innovation have diversified due to the variety of studies, and this diversity follows the nature of diversity in approaches to measuring innovation. Some scholars and writers have identified three methods for measuring innovation within an organization, which are:

- The first method focuses on the approach used in the innovation process. It aims to identify the skills and techniques employed by the innovative individual or team to generate new ideas and how they interact with the situation and events.
- The second method focuses on the outcomes. It seeks to evaluate the results presented by the individual or team described as innovative, which go beyond the ordinary and introduce new value or solutions.
- The third method focuses on the innovative individual or team themselves, studying and diagnosing their abilities and behavior in relation to innovation. This approach aims to understand the characteristics and traits that contribute to their innovative capacity (Al-Obaidi, 2010, p. 52).

B. Dimensions of Innovation:

- The Creative Individual: Refers to the person who reaches a stage of self-actualization.
- The Creative Process: Focuses on aspects related to problem-solving, thinking patterns, and information processing that constitute the process of innovation (Saeed, 2006, p. 27).

- Creative Output: Many researchers agree that creative output should be characterized by realism, non-imitation, and originality. It should also possess a set of the following characteristics:
 - Introducing what is new and contemporary;
 - The solution should be original, involving the creation and development of new ideas of value (Al-Akhdar, 2011, p. 35).

2.2. Competitive Advantage:

The concept of competitive advantage holds a significant position in both strategic management and business economics. This concept gained prominence in the early 1980s when Porter introduced the concept of competitive strategies and emphasized that the key factor for the success of organizations is their competitive position in the industry they operate in (Al-Tamimi & Al-Khashali, 2009). The importance of these concepts has become more apparent due to increased competition intensity.

2.2.1. Definition of Competitive Advantage:

According to Michael, competitive advantage arises when an organization discovers new, more effective ways compared to those used by its competitors. It is the ability to embody this discovery in practice, in other words, by initiating a creative process in its broad sense (Porter, 1985, p. 48).

It is also defined as "the organization's ability to design, produce, and market superior products compared to what its competitors offer" (Ben Abdullah, 2012, p. 298). It emphasizes its distinctiveness and differentiation from competitors from the perspective of customers who accept this difference and distinctiveness, as it provides them with additional benefits and values that surpass what other competitors offer (Al-Salami, 2001, p. 104).

Therefore, the comprehensive definition of competitive advantage is based on the idea that the impact of competitive advantage on organizations increases their growth and value, and makes them more capable of attracting buyers by offering

lower prices and high quality..

2.2.2. Main Types of Competitive Advantage:

Most studies categorize competitive advantage into two main types: cost leadership advantage and differentiation advantage.

- Cost Advantage: It refers to the organization's ability to produce a product at a lower cost compared to other competitors, which leads to higher returns. However, achieving the lowest cost is not always possible in all circumstances
- Differentiation Advantage: It is the organization's ability to offer products with unique characteristics that make them more valuable from the consumer's perspective, including quality, usability features, and after-sales services (Dalal, 2010, p. 200). .

2.3. Approaches to Building Competitive Advantage:

Building a successful competitive advantage requires being based on certain sources of competitive advantage. Companies build competitive advantage when they take steps that enable them to gain a distinctive edge over their competitors in attracting buyers. These steps can vary, such as manufacturing products of higher quality, providing superior customer service, or focusing materials on a specific department. Regardless of the approach a company chooses to build competitive advantage, customers must receive superior value compared to what is offered by competing companies. Providing superior customer value also translates into successful company performance. Numerous studies have consistently shown that companies that offer superior value in the form of low-cost or differentiated products and services, along with high-quality products, are capable of sustaining high profitability and gaining a competitive advantage

2.4. The Role of Innovation in Achieving Competitive Advantage:

Innovation is one of the key foundations for building a competitive advantage because the innovative processes undertaken by an organization represent a

success that grants it something unique, lacking in its competitors, and allows the organization to differentiate itself. This differentiation enables the organization to impose higher prices for its products or significantly reduce the costs of its products compared to others. Innovation also grants the organization sustainability and resilience in the face of competition.

Furthermore, the process of innovation allows for talent development, human resource promotion, knowledge capitalization, competency development, optimal utilization of various resources, and the utilization of advanced technology to achieve the production of high-quality, distinctive, and cost-effective products. This enables the organization to position itself at the forefront, possess a considerable market share, and establish a reputable image that distinguishes it from its competitors. Additionally, it enhances competency capabilities, acquisition of new knowledge, strategic adjustments, and overall work optimization, ultimately leading to growth, excellence, and advancement.

On the other hand, innovation can modify the intensity of competition by reducing or enhancing the capabilities of activities and adjusting entry and exit barriers. As a result, it impacts the number of organizations in the market and influences the five forces of competition and general strategies (Bouran, 2016, p. 149).

3. Field Study:

3.1. Methodological Procedures for the Field Study:

3.1.1. Study Method:

Based on the nature of the study and the objectives we seek to achieve, we will rely on the descriptive-analytical approach, which involves studying the phenomenon as it is in reality, analyzing it, and interpreting it to reach conclusions that contribute to our knowledge and understanding of the study subject.

3.1.2. Questionnaire Content:

- **Part One:** Demographic data about the individuals in the community,

including gender, age group, educational level, and years of experience.

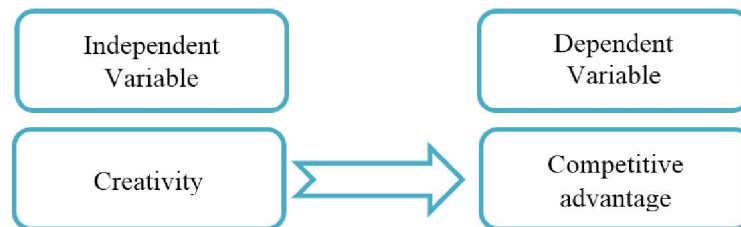
– **Part Two: Questionnaire Axes**

- First Axis: It includes 10 statements related to creativity.
- Second Axis: It includes 11 statements related to the relationship between creativity and competitive advantage.

3.1.3. Study Design and Variables:

The study variables are as follows:

Fig.1. Represents study variables



Source: Prepared by the researchers

3.1.4. Study Population:

The study population consists of tourism agencies in the Ain Defla province. We conducted a survey of all the agencies present in the province, and the sample size was predetermined, totaling 37 tourism agencies. We distributed the questionnaire form to each agency.

3.1.5. Study Tools:

We relied on the Likert five-point scale indicated in the following table:

Table 1. Represents the five-point Likert scale

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5
1-1.8	1.8-2.6	2.6-3.4	3.4-4.2	4.2-5

Source: Prepared by the researchers

3.1.6. Questionnaire Validity and Reliability:

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was used to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. This coefficient takes values between zero and one, and the closer it is to one, the higher the reliability of the study.

Table 2. Represents the validity and reliability of the questionnaire

Questionnaire axes	Number of statements	Cronbach's alpha value	%
First axis	11	0.871	87%
Second axis	10	0.894	89%
Total axes	21	0.907	91%

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the outputs of SPSS 23 software

From the table, we can observe that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient values for both the creativity and competitive advantage dimensions are 0.871 and 0.894, respectively. These values are high, indicating a high stability of the questionnaire dimensions. Moreover, the overall Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire exceeds 0.907, which indicates a high level of precision and stability.

This means that there is a significant level of consistency in the questionnaire results, and they are unlikely to change significantly even if the questionnaire is redistributed to the sample multiple times over specific time periods. This value is an important indicator of the validity and reliability of the study tool for achieving its objectives.

3.2. Questionnaire Results Analysis:

Table 3. Represents the distribution of sample individuals according to demographic data

Variable	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	25	68%
	Female	12	32%
Age	20-29	6	16%
	30-39	17	46%

	40-49	8	22%
	over 50	6	16%
Qualification	below high school	-	-
	high school	7	19%
	University	30	81%
Professional Experience	less than 05	9	24%
	between 5 and 15	22	60%
	over 15	6	16%

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the outputs of SPSS 23 software

From the table, we can observe that the percentage of males is 68% and females is 32% in terms of the distribution of sample individuals based on the gender variable. This indicates that employment opportunities in the tourism agencies in Ain Defla province are unevenly distributed between males and females. In terms of age, the majority of the respondents are within the age category of less than 40 years, with a percentage exceeding 72%. We also notice that the study sample consists predominantly of young individuals.

The remaining percentage, which is 38%, represents the age category of over 40 years. Regarding educational level, we observe that the majority of the sample individuals have a university degree, accounting for 81%, while those with a secondary level of education represent 19%. Individuals with an education level below secondary are absent, which is logical considering that this profession requires qualifications; as for professional experience, we notice that the majority of employees in tourism agencies have an experience of less than 5-15 years, accounting for 60%. This can be attributed to the fact that the age group with the highest representation is under 40 years old, This is followed by individuals with less than 5 years of experience, accounting for 24%, and those with more than 15 years of experience, accounting for 16%. This means that the majority of the sample individuals are newly employed.

Table 4. Represents the means and standard deviations of the creativity axis

Statements	SMA	SD	Evaluation	order
X1	4.45	0.612	Strongly Agree	2
X2	4.09	0.833	Agree	6
X3	4.16	0.745	Agree	4
X4	4.1	0.816	Agree	5
X5	3.85	0.925	Agree	10
X6	3.91	0.794	Agree	9
X7	4.01	0.822	Agree	8
X8	3.78	0.733	Agree	11
X9	4.06	0.821	Agree	7
X10	4.51	0.642	Strongly Agree	1
X11	4.23	0.924	Strongly Agree	3
Creativity axis	4.104	0.788	Agree	

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the outputs of SPSS 23 software

From the statistical table number 04, corresponding to the means and standard deviations of the questionnaire statements, we found that the tourism agencies strive to apply the concept of innovation within the agency in order to develop their service delivery, enhance communication, and interact with their customers. The average mean for the axis was found to be 4.10, falling under the fourth category of the five-point Likert scale, indicating a general agreement in the responses. We also observe that the standard deviation value is 0.788, indicating homogeneity and lack of variability in the responses.

The tourism agency stands out from its competitors in terms of the ease and clarity of the expressed statements, with the highest agreement rate observed for statement number 10, with an average mean of 4.51. On the other hand, the lowest agreement rate was observed for the overall statements related to the agency's

adoption of new and modern payment methods, with an average mean of 3.78 for statement number 08.

Table 5. Represents the means and standard deviations of the competitive advantage axis

Statements	SMA	SD	Evaluation	order
Y1	4.02	0.656	Agree	5
Y2	4.12	0.688	Agree	3
Y3	4.2	0.714	Strongly Agree	2
Y4	4.32	0.545	Strongly Agree	1
Y5	4.04	0.655	Agree	4
Y6	3.65	0.876	Agree	10
Y7	3.68	0.933	Agree	9
Y8	3.76	0.864	Agree	8
Y9	3.88	0.736	Agree	6
Y10	3.96	0.678	Agree	7
Competitive advantage axis	3.963	0.7345	Agree	

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the outputs of SPSS 23 software

From the statistical table number 05, corresponding to the means and standard deviations of the questionnaire statements for the competitive advantage axis, we found that the overall mean for the competitive advantage variable was 3.96, which is higher than the hypothetical mean of 3, with a standard deviation of 0.734.

This indicates homogeneity in the responses of the study sample, suggesting that the participants tend to agree on the statements related to the agency's competitive advantage.

The statements related to the agency's competitive advantage received a high agreement rate in the study sample, indicating that the respondents generally

agreed with these statements. The most significant statement, with the highest agreement rate and an average mean of 4.32, was about the agency providing new services at lower prices than its competitors and with a high level of quality (statement number 04). On the other hand, the lowest agreement rate was observed for statements related to the agency's ability to utilize information technology opportunities that other agencies cannot possess (statement number 06) within this axis.

3.3. Testing the hypothesis of the study:

- **Null hypothesis (H0):** There is no statistically significant relationship between creativity and enhancing competitive advantage in tourism agencies at a significance level of $\alpha \leq 0.05$.
- **Alternative hypothesis (H1):** There is a statistically significant relationship between creativity and enhancing competitive advantage in tourism agencies at a significance level of $\alpha \leq 0.05$.

Table 6. Results of linear regression analysis to measure the impact of creativity in tourism services on enhancing the competitive advantage of tourism agencies

The relationship between creativity and enhancing competitive advantage				
Regression coefficient		A	B	*Statistically significant at a significance level of 0.05
		19.398	0.837	
t-value	Student's t-test	92,239	6.036	
Sig		0.000*	0.000*	
Correlation coefficient R		0.63		
Coefficient of determination R2		0.56		
Fisher's value F		36.431		
Significance level		0.000*		

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the outputs of SPSS 23 software

We observe the following from the table above:

- The correlation coefficient between creativity and supporting competitive advantage for tourism agencies is 0.63, indicating a strong positive correlation between them.
- The coefficient of determination $R^2=0.318$, which means that 56% of the variations in the dependent variable (supporting competitive advantage for tourism agencies) can be explained by the independent variable (creativity), while the remaining 44% is attributed to other factors that influence competitiveness.
- The F-value of 36.431, with a significance level of 0.000, which is less than the nominal significance level of 0.05 ($\alpha=0.05$), **indicating a significant relationship between creativity and supporting competitive advantage**. Therefore, we accept the alternative hypothesis, which states that there is a statistically significant effect of creativity on supporting competitive advantage in tourism agencies at a significance level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$), and we reject the null hypothesis.
- The constant value $a=19.398$ corresponds to $t=0.2239$ with a probability of 0.000, which is less than the significance level $\alpha=0.05$, indicating that it is statistically acceptable.
- The regression coefficient $b_1=0.837$ corresponds to $t=6.036$ with a probability of 0.000, which is less than the nominal significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$), indicating that it is statistically acceptable.

4. CONCLUSION:

Based on this study on the impact of creativity in supporting the competitive advantage of tourism agencies, and the results we have obtained, we can conclude that competitiveness is now a necessity for the survival and continuity of the tourism organization in light of the rapid changes and developments in the economic environment. It enables them to face the challenges of competition in

the sector. Creativity is considered one of the mechanisms to support the competitiveness of the organization, and it has become an essential necessity and a fundamental pillar for improving the competitiveness of the organization to ensure its survival and continuity.

For a successful organization to ensure its survival and continuity, it should not settle for just being efficient, meaning that it should not be satisfied with performing its tasks or fulfilling the assigned responsibilities alone. Instead, its strategy should be more forward-looking and future-oriented, where its competitive position in the market is distinguished through the quality of its services, efficiency of its performance, and expanding its goals. In other words, for the organization to be innovative and creative, it must give clear attention and encouragement to innovation and technological renewal.

4.1. Results of hypothesis testing:

- Creativity leads to the development of the organization's competitive advantage, depending on the nature of its competitive advantage.
- The competitive advantage of the tourism agency represents a crucial source of its superiority over other competitors, and this can be achieved through producing distinctive products or products with lower costs.
- Agencies rely on a policy of developing and improving services and diversifying them through various sources, while relying on technology transfer to acquire new information.

4.2. Study recommendations:

In order to create creative tourism agencies and seek to develop their competitive advantages, the following suggestions can be made:

- Raise awareness among agency owners about the importance of creativity and its role in improving competitive advantages, as well as acquiring and developing them.
- The necessity of market research to identify available opportunities and

utilize them to differentiate from competitors.

- Provide an organizational climate that encourages agency employees to contribute innovative ideas, through their participation in solving problems that the agencies may face.

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