

Perceptions and Realities of Lisbon: An Examination of the Image of a Tourist Destination

Filipe Segurado Severino^{1,4}, Ana Gláucia Roque^{1,2}, Margarida Cristina^{2,3}, Zélia Raposo Santos², Sandra Nunes³ and Teresa Costa^{3,4}

¹ Escola Superior de Hotelaria e Turismo do Estoril (ESHTE), Estoril, Portugal

² Escola Superior de Comunicação Social, Instituto Politécnico de Lisboa (IPL), Lisbon, Portugal

³ Escola Superior de Ciências Empresariais, Instituto Politécnico de Setúbal (IPS), Setúbal, Portugal

⁴ Centro de Investigação, Desenvolvimento e Inovação em Turismo (CiTUR), Estoril, Portugal

filipe.severino@eshte.pt

12991@alunos.eshte.pt

margaridagcristina@gmail.com

zsantos@escs.ipl.pt

sandra.nunes@esce.ips.pt

teresa.costa@esce.ips.pt

Abstract: Destination image is related to comprising cognitive, emotional, and conative components and includes an individual's thoughts, ideas, and perceptions of a place. Images consistently coincide with the internalisation of distinct perspectives, demonstrating that people have different perceptions of the destiny. Influences include media, authority figures, music, and movies. Although the experience may not match their initial expectations, these effects form their preconceived beliefs and expectations of a trip. Accordingly, it is important to explore the trustfulness of the positioning of tourist destinations to ascertain its alignment with the expectations of tourists.

Given that, Lisbon has been regarded as one of the foremost European cities in recent years, owing to its high level of accessibility and its multifaceted sensory attributes, it was deemed pertinent to investigate the perceptions of the visitors towards the city.

The present study used a mixed methods approach, incorporating a multimedia component that showcases various locations in the Lisbon region with open-ended questionnaires to gather the perspectives of the tourists and a closed-ended questionnaire that inquiries about the primary factors that attract visitors to Lisbon. This analysis employed graphical representations, including word clouds and graphics to explore the identified impressions.

The research revealed a robust association between cultural, historical, and aesthetic variables and the choice of travel destination. Certain visual representations highlight the imperative of pursuing sustainable and responsible development to mitigate the potential for enduring degradation. This holds significance as certain images are linked to instances of environmental and social irresponsibility. The study also revealed that History and Heritage emerged as the most significant factors that attract individuals, followed by Cultural Attractions, Weather and Climate, Gastronomy, and Panoramic Views and Landscapes. A notable perception exists regarding the insufficiency of sustainability and eco-friendly practices, underscoring the necessity for targeted sustainability endeavours to promote responsible and sustainable development of tourism destinations.

Indeed, additional research on the contrast of perception and reality at the location is needed to evaluate the picture provided to visitors. However, understanding tourist-relevant areas like Lisbon is a good foundation for advertising them, allowing various stakeholders to make authentic and valuable marketing decisions.

Keywords – Destination Image, Lisbon, Tourist Experience, Tourism Perception, Travel Marketing.

1. Introduction

In the field of tourism research, there is a widely accepted consensus regarding the essential importance of understanding the factors that motivate tourists and impact their decision-making processes concerning travel destinations (Njagi et al., 2017). Understanding these motivations is imperative for market segmentation and enabling tourism stakeholders to effectively concentrate on their intended target audience (Baniya and Paudel, 2016; Mwawaza et al., 2022; Reihanian et al., 2015). To enhance customer satisfaction with their travel experiences, it is imperative to possess widespread knowledge of travel motivations, as Camilleri (2019) stated.

The term destination image encompasses the holistic portrayal of an individual's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of a particular geographical area (Lee et al., 2023; Beerli and Martin, 2004). The intricate nature of this concept is influenced by a multitude of factors, including its portrayal in media, endorsements

from influential figures, and depictions in music and film. The formation of mental imagery among travellers results from a collective endeavour involving a multitude of sources (Tocquer and Zins, 1999).

Tourists often embark on their journeys with preconceived notions and anticipations, which may or may not align with their actual experiences at the intended destination (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993). The disparity between the projected benchmarks and the real-life encounter of travel underscores the significance of scrutinising the dependability of the depiction of tourist destinations and the impact of appealing factors in shaping these perceptions (Stylydis, 2020).

The main objective of this study is to examine the intricate connection between pull factors and destination image, recognising that the former often plays a pivotal role in the decision-making process of tourists when choosing a destination (Lee et al., 2002). To comprehensively analyse this subject, a meticulous review of academic literature was conducted, with particular emphasis on the interconnected relationship between pull factors, destination image, and the diverse range of travel motivations.

The present research focuses on the Lisbon region, which has garnered recognition as a prominent European destination in recent years (Vidal et al., 2023). Lisbon is widely recognised for its outstanding accessibility and its capacity to provide a wide array of sensory experiences to its tourists (Resonance Consultancy, 2023). This study employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods to examine the perception of pull factors in the Lisbon region and its association with the destination image among tourists. The aim was to comprehend the nature of this relationship and explore potential variations, such as those based on gender.

To provide visitors with a more accurate representation, it is essential to undertake a more extensive examination of the relationship between destination image and pull factors. However, gaining an understanding of tourist-relevant destinations, such as Lisbon, and how they align with factors that attract visitors, lays the foundation for effective promotion, allowing tourism agents to make informed and authentic marketing decisions.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Travel Decisions: Destination Pull Factors

Travels allow individuals to engage in self-exploration, cultivate fresh social relationships, and fortify familial ties, ultimately enriching both their social and personal identities (Liutikas, 2012). The formation of travellers' personalities is substantially influenced by their engagement with various cultures (Wearing et al., 2010). This phenomenon is especially noteworthy in situations involving working holiday volunteers who participate in cultural immersion experiences, which result in improved self-assurance, skill development, and emotional equilibrium (Tsauro and Huang, 2016). Moreover, religious tourists, who are frequently attracted to holy sites, continually endeavour to attain a deep sense of affiliation (Bideci and Albayrak, 2016; Poria, 2003). Hence, travellers' psychological well-being could be positively impacted by the distinctive experiences provided by the host culture (Reitsamer and Brunner-Sperdin, 2017).

Pull factors, inherent to the physical resources and appeal of a destination, substantially impact how travellers make decisions (Rita et al., 2018). These factors encompass a wide range of destination activities. Demographic characteristics, including age, occupation, and educational background, can influence these activities. Additionally, the type of vacation under consideration, like city excursions, nature-oriented trips, resort getaways, theme park visits, or cruise vacations, also affects these factors (Rao et al., 1992; Hsieh et al., 1992). A multitude of scholarly research has discerned unique pull motivators, encompassing travel convenience, natural wilderness, cosmopolitan settings, accessible amenities, hunting prospects, and financial feasibility (Yuan and McDonald, 1990). The region's image and visitor influx are notably impacted by a multitude of factors associated with the destination, including environmental sustainability, safety protocols, and travel infrastructure quality (You et al., 2000).

The interaction between internal and external forces that influence the decisions of travellers is clarified within the conceptual framework of push and pull factors (Uysal and Jurowski, 1994; Mutinda and Mayaka, 2012). Push factors originate from intrinsic motivations and include the pursuit of escapism, relaxation, social status, daring experiences, intellectual growth, and social engagement. On the other hand, pull factors encompass the concrete elements of tourism, including the anticipations and perceptions of visitors concerning the calibre, allure, and characteristics of a particular location, including but not limited to climate, historical significance, natural splendour, and cultural contributions.

Furthermore, travellers seeking an escape are enticed by a variety of appealing factors, including picturesque beaches, pleasant local communities, natural landscapes, recreational facilities, theme parks, historical sites, unique ways of life, and breathtaking landscapes (Kassean and Gassita, 2013; Li et al., 2016; Li and Cheng, 2016). Prominent pull factors that substantially impact the choice of destinations include opulent lodgings, dining establishments, and shopping prospects (Chen and Peng, 2018; Park et al., 2010; Xu et al., 2018).

Additionally, five pull motivational variables, and six push motivational variables were identified in the cohort of British outbound leisure travellers by Jang and Cai (2002). The push factor identified as "knowledge seeking" was found to be the most influential, whereas "cleanliness and safety" emerged as the most prominent pull factor. Jonsson and Devonish (2008) underscore the substantial influence that demographic variables, including gender and age, have on the perception of tourist destinations.

According to Meng and Uysal (2008), the gender aspect can also contribute to differences in tourist preferences in pull factors. The study explored the gender-specific dimension of tourist motivation, offering valuable insights into the nuanced variations in how males and females perceive the attributes of a given destination. When examining preferences, it is commonly observed that males tend to prioritise engaging in outdoor activities and making use of amenities offered by resorts. On the other hand, women generally place more importance on leisure activities that involve outdoor settings and the appreciation of scenic landscapes. Moreover, a study conducted by McGehee in 1996 revealed that males are more inclined to engage in daring and thrilling experiences while driving.

The primary objective of the research undertaken by McGehee, Murphy, and Uysal (1996) was to examine potential gender discrepancies in the push and pull motivating factors of Australian tourists. The results of the research revealed noticeable discrepancies in the interests of female and male travelers. An investigation was similarly undertaken by Li, Wen, and Leung (2011) to examine the underlying factors that drive Chinese female travelers to participate in travel activities. Push and pull elements were identified by the researchers as the two distinct factors that influenced these individuals. Additionally, gender differences were apparent among the travelers, with females demonstrating a predilection for seeking tranquility and rejuvenation while males exhibited a preference for seeking pleasure and participating in active activities at the travel destination.

In brief, pull factors exert an influence on the process of travel decision-making and shape individuals' perceptions of potential destinations. Various demographic factors and types of vacations exert an influence on individuals' decision-making processes. A range of pull factors influences the appeal of a destination. The inherent magnetic attraction of the destination serves as a catalyst for attracting tourists, thereby stimulating growth in the tourism sector. It is imperative for destination marketers and other relevant stakeholders to possess a comprehensive understanding of pull factors and destination image perception to effectively curate captivating and alluring travel experiences.

3. Method

The objective of this study was to explore what factors influence tourists to visit Lisbon Metropolitan Area, as well their perspectives on this region, which encompasses various municipalities in the Portuguese capital region, including Alcochete, Almada, Amadora, Barreiro, Cascais, Lisbon, Loures, Mafra, Moita, Montijo, Odivelas, Oeiras, Palmela, Sesimbra, Setúbal, Seixal, Sintra, and Vila Franca de Xira. To accomplish this objective, the study employed a mixed-method research design integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches. This choice was based on the belief that using these approaches can yield more robust findings, thereby enhancing the overall value and coherence of the study (Davies, 2003). In order to accomplish the general objective, the current study was divided into two secondary objectives. The first aimed to understand the perceptions of tourists regarding the Lisbon region as a destination, with a specific emphasis on identifying the fundamental attributes that these stakeholders perceive in the region. The second secondary objective was to analyse the primary factors that attract individuals to the Lisbon region, followed by a comparison between their perception of the region and the considered attraction factors.

The study incorporated two higher schools in Portugal: "Escola Superior de Ciências Empresariais" in Setúbal and "Escola Superior de Hotelaria e Turismo do Estoril" in Estoril. The data collection process consisted of two main phases. In the qualitative phase of the study, a group of 193 participants actively participated in questionnaires with audiovisual aids. The process involved presenting a series of fifteen distinct images, each representing various areas within the Lisbon Metropolitan Region. Participants were given a limited viewing time of 5 to 10 seconds per image, during which they were instructed to provide one word that best captured their emotional response to each image. The objective was to identify the initial perceptions of each participant regarding images

depicting the Lisbon Metropolitan Area.

During the quantitative phase of the study, the same participants (193) were invited to answer a brief online survey. The instrument encompassed an inquiry pertaining to the primary factors (pull factors) that a tourist considers when selecting the Lisbon Metropolitan Area as their preferred tourist destination. Furthermore, alongside the primary stages, sociodemographic information, including age, gender, and income, was gathered. The suggested pull factors were determined based on previous studies conducted in the Lisbon region and Portugal as a whole (Albernaz, 2023; Barreira et al., 2017; Miranda and Dias, 2020; Sarra et al., 2015; Silva, 2021; Vareiro and Mendes, 2019). The most relevant and intriguing factors were selected, taking into account input from two tourism professionals with practical experience in the region under investigation.

Given that the data collected in the first phase consisted of qualitative text-based information, the data were subjected to analysis using a graphical representation known as a Word Cloud. This technique organises key phrases based on their frequency or other relevant parameters, and visually presents them with varying attributes such as size and color (Ye et al., 2019). By employing this approach, it was possible to gain insights into the primary perceptions of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area and its impact as a tourist destination. Subsequently, the data collected in the second phase was analysed. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarise and rank the pull factors using frequency analysis, complemented by the inclusion of graphics and tables. The results of this analysis provide valuable insights into the impact of tourists and their perceptions on the Lisbon Metropolitan Area.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Lisbon Region Perception

From a sociodemographic perspective, it is noteworthy that 85% of the participants fall within the age range of 18 to 25 years. This distribution of age within the sample is significantly skewed, indicating an imbalance in age representation. Similarly, it is worth mentioning that 68.4% of the participants possess an income below 500€, while 15.8% have an income ranging from 501€ to 1000€. Furthermore, 8.5% of the respondents fall within the income bracket of 1001€ to 2000€, whereas 4.5% have an income between 2001€ and 4000€. Lastly, a minority of 2.8% reported having an income exceeding 4000€. In relation to gender, the sample exhibits a balanced distribution, comprising 50.3% male and 47.2% female participants, while 2.6% of participants chose not to disclose their gender.

Considering the characteristics of the participants, a total of fifteen images were carefully selected to evaluate the respondents' perception of the Lisbon region. These images were chosen to represent various aspects of this Portuguese region, as shown in Figure 1.

<p>Rua Augusta Arch</p> <p>•Triumphal arch located in the southeast part of Rua Augusta, in Lisbon. The image shows the arch itself, with the cable car passing in front of it.</p>	<p>Palmela Castle</p> <p>•Castle located in Palmela, in the district of Setúbal. The image exposes the monument in its entirety, from a point of view that allows to observe the surrounding nature.</p>	<p>MAAT</p> <p>•Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology in Lisbon, with a more current design and trend. The image shows a plan that captures its upper part and proximity to the Tagus River, with people around it.</p>
<p>Praça do Comércio</p> <p>•Historic square in downtown Lisbon, located next to Tagus River. The image shows a close-up of the Rua Augusta Arch, with many people passing by.</p>	<p>Mosteiro dos Jerónimos</p> <p>•Portuguese monastery in Manueline style (Portuguese Gothic), located in Belém, in the city of Lisbon. The image shows part of the monument, with a long queue to enter.</p>	<p>Cabo de Espichel</p> <p>•Cape next to the Atlantic Ocean, with dizzying heights, located in Sesimbra. The image shows a view of the Cape, along with the fullness of the ocean.</p>
<p>Livramento Market</p> <p>•Main market for agricultural and fish products in the Setúbal region. The image demonstrates commercial activity, with traders and buyers.</p>	<p>Albarquel Urban Park</p> <p>•Urban Park, next to the Arrábida mountain range, located in the city of Setúbal. The image shows several people on a terrace, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.</p>	<p>Glória Elevator</p> <p>•Elevator that connects Baixa de Lisboa with Bairro Alto, located in the historic center of Lisbon. The image shows a cluster of people, with walls and the elevator itself covered in graffiti.</p>
<p>Carcavelos Beach</p> <p>•Beach located in the Cascais region, bathed by the Atlantic Ocean. The image exposes trash present in the sand, with few bathers present.</p>	<p>Palácio da Pena</p> <p>•Palace that represents one of the main expressions of Romanticism in Portugal, located in Sintra. The image shows the different colors that the Palace has, with a queue of people to enter it.</p>	<p>Torre de Belém</p> <p>•Tower near the Tagus River, with a Manueline style, located in Belém, in the city of Lisbon. The image shows a cluster of people sitting around it, with umbrellas and benches.</p>
<p>Tróia Beach</p> <p>•Beach that faces Serra de Arrábida, in Grândola. The image shows several people at the water's edge, with a view of the mountains.</p>	<p>Time Out Market</p> <p>•Food Hall located in Mercado da Ribeira, in Calis do Sodré, in the city of Lisbon. The image shows a large cluster of people eating meals.</p>	<p>São Jorge's Castle</p> <p>•Castle located on the highest hill in the historic center of Lisbon. The image shows the castle walls, with several picturesque houses around it.</p>

Figure 1: Description of the images used to collect the perception of the Lisbon region, Portugal.

4.2 Lisbon Region Pull Factors

Regarding the pull factors associated with the Lisbon region, thirty factors connected to the region's distinctive characteristics were presented, as depicted in Figure 3. The participants were given the opportunity to select, using a multiple-choice format, the factors they deemed most significant in attracting individuals to the region. A total of twelve main factors emerged from the responses: "History and Heritage" received 134 responses, "Cultural attractions" received 129 responses, "Weather and Climate" received 122 responses, "Museums and Art" received 100 responses, "Local Cuisine" and "Panoramic Views and Landscapes" both received 96 responses, "Nightlife and Entertainment" received 88 responses, "Architectural Heritage" received 77 responses, "Historical Landmarks" received 74 responses, "Portuguese Tiles" received 73 responses, and "Beaches and Coastal Scenery" and "Security and Protection" both received 71 responses.

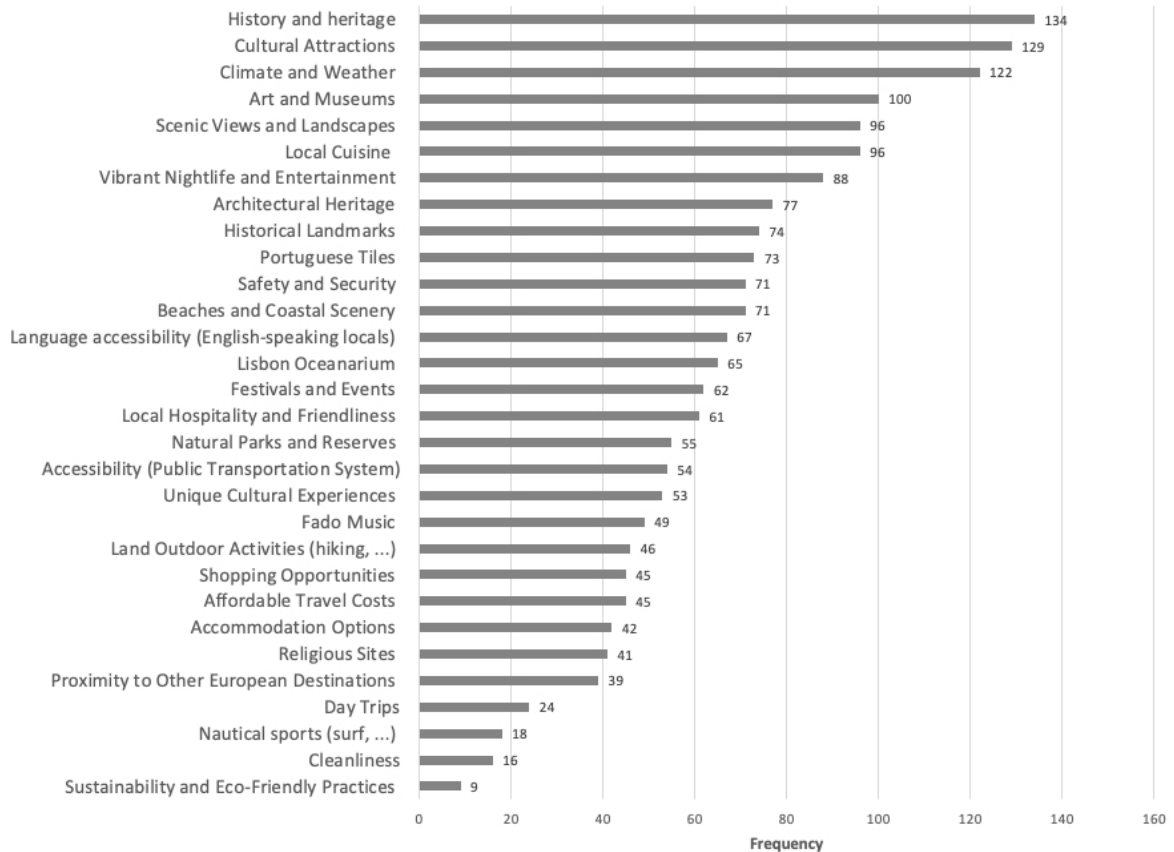


Figure 3: Graphic with the main pull factors linked to the Lisbon region.

In a comprehensive global analysis, it becomes evident that the variables associated with culture and history exhibit the highest proportion. Specifically, "History and Heritage" garnered a substantial percentage of 76.2% (147 respondents), while "Cultural Attractions" obtained a significant proportion of 71.5%. The topic of "Weather and Climate" accounts for a majority of 67.9%. Two other notable aspects are "Local cuisine" and "Panoramic views and landscapes", both of which received a 53.9% rating.

One aspect that merits attention is the relatively low level of responses in the category of "Sustainability and Eco-friendly Practices", which accounts for only 5.2% or 10 participants.

The responses were examined with consideration given to the gender of each participant (excluding the 2.6% who did not disclose their gender). The analysis revealed that there were no statistically significant variations in the selections made, as depicted in Figure 4. The factors selected by the majority of participants are consistent with the overall observations.

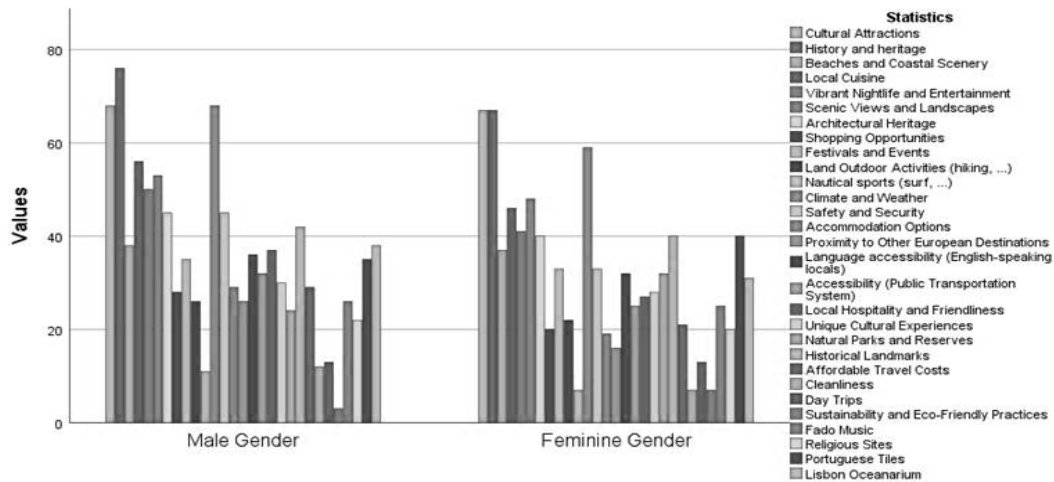


Figure 4: Graphic with the cross-tabulation of the pull factors with the gender.

5. Conclusion

This study intended to study Lisbon's perceptions of tourists towards the city and encompassed two phases: (1) to identify the perceptions of visitors regarding images depicting the Lisbon region and (2) characterise the main pull factors associated with the destiny.

Concerning the first phase, it is possible to verify that cultural, history and aesthetics are associated with this destination. This first conclusion, the mention of some inputs associated to images, reveal the need to plan and implement more sustainable and responsible strategies for this tourism destination development to avoid its degradation in the medium and long term. In fact, the lack of environmental and social sustainability is frequently associated with some images. Regarding the second phase, the study confirmed the pull factors related with "History and Heritage" followed by "Cultural Attractions", "Weather and Climate", "Local cuisine" and "Panoramic views and landscapes". During this phase, the perception of lack of "Sustainability and eco-friendly Practices" was confirmed.

In terms of gender, the study explored possible differences considering tourist motivation, however, it was not possible to conclude that there are differences when examining preferences among genders.

This study reinforces the idea that touristic destination image studies are valued to understand which elements are more important to tourists, since this information can be used in promotion and strategy.

Finally, it is important to note that the sample size was ideal, as the statistical validity would have been bigger with more observations. This is related to two main constraints: time and resources. Consequently, the study will be repeated with a larger and age-representative sample.

Funding and Acknowledgements

This research is supported by "Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia" (FCT), Portugal, through the SHIFT project (Sustainability-oriented, Highly interactive, and Innovation-based Framework for Tourism marketing), reference number PTDC/EDE-OGE/2146/2021.

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