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Article

Calli: A Proposal for an Accommodation Platform for the Huasteca Region of Hidalgo

Calli: Propuesta de una Plataforma de Alojamiento para la Huasteca Hidalguense

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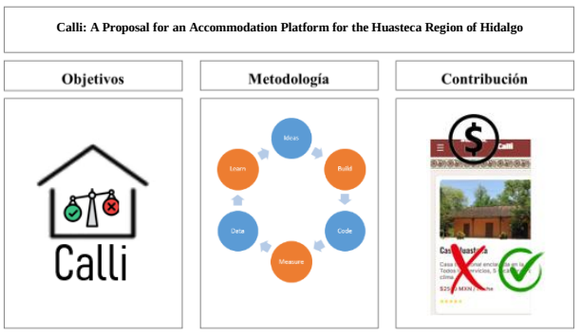
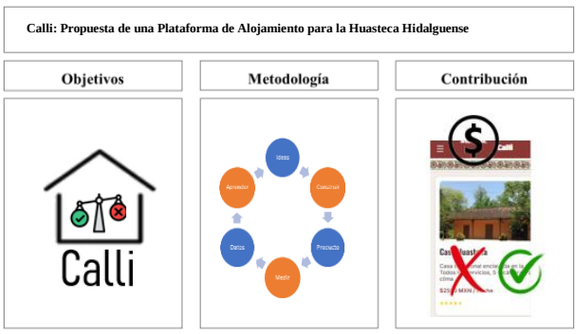
Abstract

Huejutla de Reyes, located in the Huasteca region of the state of Hidalgo, Mexico, has established itself as a leading regional cultural tourism destination and is recognized nationally. In 2024 alone, it received 350,000 visitors (Hernández, 2024). The existing accommodations are overwhelmed by demand, so this project aims to compile the various lodging options available in the region. Using the Lean Startup methodology, a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) is being developed: *Calli*, which means "*house*" in nahuatl, is conceived as an inclusive and secure technological solution that will allow individuals in the municipality and the region to register and promote their lodging offerings.

Resumen

Huejutla de Reyes ubicado en la huasteca del estado de Hidalgo, México; se ha consolidado como un referente de turismo cultural regional y con reconocimiento a nivel nacional. Tan solo en el año 2024 tuvo una afluencia de 350,000 visitantes (Hernández, 2024). El alojamiento establecido se ve rebasado por la demanda, por lo que este proyecto pretende recopilar las distintas ofertas de la región que ofrecen hospedaje, a través de la metodología *Lean Startup* se proyecta un PMV: *Calli*, que en náhuatl significa "casa" se concibe como una solución tecnológica, inclusiva y segura para que particulares del municipio y la región puedan registrar y promover sus ofertas de alojamiento.





Collaborative accommodation, Mobile App, Tourism Huejutla

Alojamiento colaborativo, App Móvil, Turismo Huejutla

Area: Development of strategic leading-edge technologies and open innovation for social transformation

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Introduction

In our country, the tourism business is becoming increasingly important. According to UN Tourism, Mexico remains the sixth most visited country in the world [Ministry of Tourism, 2025].

For its part, INEGI reported that in August 2025, 7,880,311 visitors entered the country, 14.7% more than in the same month in 2024. Of this number, 3,786,226 (48.0%) were international tourists—travellers residing abroad who stayed overnight in Mexico [INEGI, 2025].

With regard to the state of Hidalgo, the State Secretary of Tourism reported that Hidalgo has received 7 million visitors so far this year, an increase of 46% compared to the beginning of the state's six-year term [Nochebuena, 2025].

The mountain and Huasteca regions of Hidalgo, made up of the municipalities of Atlapexco, Calnali, Huautla, Huazalingo, Huejutla de Reyes, Jaltocán, Lolotla, San Felipe Orizatlán, Tlanchinol, Xochiatipan, and Yahualica, offers opportunities for cultural tourism (religious, gastronomic, and ethnic) and nature tourism (ecotourism, rural, and adventure), with tourism potential based on heritage conservation, the richness of ecosystems, and traditional communities [SECTURH, 2024].

Huejutla de Reyes is a municipality nestled in the Huasteca region of the state of Hidalgo, Mexico. In recent years, it has established itself as a benchmark for regional cultural tourism and has gained national recognition. In 2024 alone, it had an influx of 350,000 visitors [Hernández, 2024]

This massive influx of visitors stems from tourists' interest in immersing themselves in and experiencing the popular culture of this municipality and others that make up the Hidalgo, Veracruz and San Luis Potosí Huasteca regions, where Huejutla is a key hub due to its road infrastructure and tourism services.

Folkloric and religious events, notably the Xantolo festival (Huasteco Day of the Dead), increase the demand for accommodation services, with most hotels located in the municipal capitals, as these are the main urban centres.

However, some accommodation options can be found within the ecotourism developments in the area, as can be seen in Table 1.

Box 1

Table 1
Temporary accommodation establishments by municipality

Municipality	Total	4*	3*	2*	1*	SC
Atlapexco	3	0	0	0	0	3
Calnali	8	0	0	0	0	8
Huautla	2	0	0	0	0	2
Huazalingo	0	0	0	0	0	0
Huejutla de Reyes	42	0	0	0	0	42
Jaltocán	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lolotla	4	0	0	0	1	3
San Felipe Orizatlán	4	0	0	0	0	4
Tlanchinol	7	0	0	1	2	4
Xochiatipan	1	0	0	0	0	1
Yahualica	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source SECTURH (2024)

The number of places is estimated at a total of 2,369, according to data from the 2023 State Tourist Information System, of which 942 (39.76%) are located in Huejutla de Reyes. As can be seen, temporary accommodation is overwhelmed by demand, so this project aims to compile the different offers in the region that provide accommodation, differentiating itself by offering a regional tourism experience, being pet-friendly, combining safety, sustainability and authentic local experiences, and centralising them through Calli, a mobile app that seeks to promote collaborative accommodation.

Calli, which means '*house*' in Nahuatl, is conceived as a technological, inclusive and secure solution for individuals in the municipality and the region to register and promote their accommodation offers.

Methodology

Lean Startup is a business management methodology that aims to create a business model in an agile and secure way, shortening development cycles and establishing continuous innovation processes [Ries, 2011]. In one way or another, we have all witnessed a company with a promising future inexplicably fail. For the creator of the Lean Startup methodology, many of these companies make decisions based on the results of market research.

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'There is an irresistible temptation to apply this to startups as well, but this does not work because they operate with much more uncertainty. Startups do not yet know who their consumers will be or what their products will be,' explains Eric Ries.

The Lean Startup approach promotes capital efficiency and leverages human creativity. It is based on 'validated learning,' rapid experimentation that shortens product development cycles, measures actual progress, and learns what customers really want, allowing companies to change course at the right time and avoiding the development of products that do not meet customer needs.

The methodology seeks to reduce uncertainty, given that the interest of those involved can be quickly validated, the business model can be experimented with, as well as the website and the regulatory framework of the service, through validated learning and pivoting to adjust or modify it.

Box 2

Information feedback loop create-measure-learn

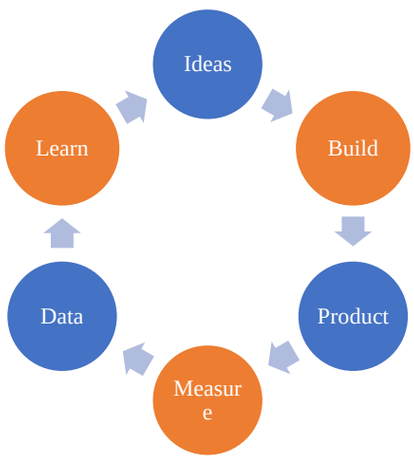

Figure 1
Basic stages of the Lean Startup method
Source: Own Elaboration

Figure 1 shows the iteration of activities proposed in the methodology, followed by a description of each one.

The Lean Startup method consists of a continuous three-step cycle: Build, Measure, and Learn. Based on ideas and needs, a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) is built to test the hypotheses proposed from the ideas. Subsequently, the customer's response is measured using indicators or metrics.

Finally, this information is used to learn from the data in order to decide whether to continue with the product, make a *pivot* (change of direction) or continue improving the current version.

In short, the aim of this methodology is to ensure that no company wastes time and money developing a solution to a non-existent problem.

Build

Based on the project's preliminary ideas and with a palpable need identified, the following hypothesis is proposed:

If the inhabitants of Huejutla have a simple, easy-to-use and secure digital platform to register and offer temporary accommodation, they will be willing to publish their spaces in order to meet part of the tourist demand and generate local income opportunities.

In order to validate the hypothesis and identify needs, two surveys were conducted, targeting potential customers—both locals who can offer accommodation (hosts) and tourists who demand accommodation. These surveys were validated using the Delphi method, which aims to structure the criteria that can measure the object of study through a communicative process involving experts [López-Gómez, 2018].

Determination of the needs of potential users (tourism)

A sample size with a finite population was determined in order to know how many units of analysis were necessary for the proposed purpose. This took into account the available resources and the minimum requirements for a reliable analysis [Fisher & Espejo, 2016].

Therefore, the formula for finite population sampling was used.

$$n = \frac{\mathrm{N}\mathrm{Z}^2 pq}{(N-1)e^2+\mathrm{Z}^2 pq}$$

Where:
n = sample size to be calculated
N = population size
Z = standard deviation according to the confidence level
P, Q = proportion of expected variability, 0.5
E = margin of error

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From this, we obtained that:

$$n = \frac{(35000)(1.96)^2(0.5)(0.5)}{(34999)(0.05)^2+(1.96)^2(0.5)(0.5)}$$

For a
N = 35,000
Z = 1.96 (for 95% confidence)
e = 0.05 (margin of error of 5%)
p = 0.5
q = 0.5

This determined a sample size of 380.0 units of analysis.

The survey was conducted during the Xantolo 2024 period. It was administered to individuals between the ages of 15 and 60, regardless of gender or academic degree.

The results of the survey administered to those seeking accommodation are as follows:

Box 3

Table 2

1. How often do you visit this region and for what reasons?

Reason	Frecuency
Cultural tourism	205
Nature/adventure	60
Family events	30
Temporary work	60
Other	25

Source: Own Elaboration

This result encouraged the idea of developing the PMV, given that there is sustained demand from visitors.

Box 4

Table 3

2. What type of accommodation do you usually prefer when travelling?

Type	Frecuency
Hotels	156
Hostels	60
Temporary rentals	80
Family homes	60
I have no preference	24

Source: Own Elaboration

This result shows that there is a demand from people who prefer other accommodation options besides hotels.

Box 5

Table 4

3. What factors do you consider most important when choosing accommodation?

Factor	Frecuency
Price	120
Location	150
Security	250
Opinions/Reviews	189
Services included	208
Authenticity	106
Ease of booking	117

Source: Own Elaboration

In this question, respondents selected three options they considered priorities, highlighting safety, included services, and reviews.

Box 6

Table 5

4. How confident are you when booking accommodation offered by individuals?

Confidence level	Frecuency
Very high	10
High	23
Medium	125
Low	177

Source: Own Elaboration

This result guides us to seek mechanisms through the app proposal to increase the level of trust among users. It is also expected, given that it is not a common service in the region.

Box 7

Table 6

5. Which payment methods would you prefer to use on a local accommodation platform?

Method	Frecuency
Debit/credit card	280
MercadoPago	120
Bank transfer	166
Cash payment on arrival	50
Mixed payment	144

Source: Own Elaboration

This result highlights the different payment options that should be prioritised for inclusion in the application, according to user needs.

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Box 8

Table 7

6. What features do you consider essential for a local accommodation website?

Functionality	Frecuency
Verified potos	135
Clear accommodation information	380
Filters	72
Interactive map	57
Direct chat	156
Verified host identity	96
Cancellation policies	87
Customer support	157

Source: Own Elaboration

Respondents were asked to select the three options they considered most important, identifying customer support, clear accommodation information and verified photos as the most relevant.

Box 9

Table 7

6. What features do you consider essential for a local accommodation website?

Functionality	Frecuency
Verified photos	135
Clear accommodation information	380
Filters	72
Interactive map	57
Direct chat	156
Verified host identity	96
Cancellation policies	87
Customer support	157

Source: Own Elaboration

This result points to strengthening the information describing the services and characteristics of the accommodation, the images and customer support, as well as the choice of an entity to verify the information published.

Box 10

Table 8

7. What kind of experiences would motivate you to choose local accommodation?

Reason	Frecuency
Gastronomy	248
Cultural activities	349
Rural or nature experiences	155
Interaction with the community	8

Source: Own Elaboration

This question also points to strengthening other additional services and can be seen as an opportunity to boost other sectors through the application, such as the gastronomic sector, local crafts, other economic activities such as embroidery, bread making, candle making, among others, as well as guided tours of communities and their customs.

Box 11

Table 9

8. Have you used platforms such as Airbnb, Booking, or others?

Use	Frecuency
Yes	117
No	263

Source: Own Elaboration

This result indicates that most visitors are not accustomed to using a local accommodation service platform.

Box 12

Table 10

9. If your answer is yes, how would you describe your experience?

Degree of satisfaction	Frecuency
Excellent	6
Very good	43
Good	46
Fair	15
Poor	7

Source: Own Elaboration

It is clear that if this approach is chosen, work will need to be done not only with the application but also with service providers (hosts) to change this perception in a regional approach.

Box 13

Table 11

10. What would motivate you to use a local accommodation platform?

Reason	Frecuency
More affordable prices	275
Greater authenticity	125
Better security policies	109
More confidence in verified hosts	178
Ease of use	73

Source: Own Elaboration

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Trust in verified hosts and prices stood out in this question, highlighting once again the need for a host verification entity.

Determining the needs of potential users (service providers)

To identify the needs of service providers (hosts), local people who post on social media were contacted, totalling 12 people, who account for a total of 120 places, representing 10% of the current local supply.

All of them were asked the following questions:

Box 14

Table 12

1. How willing would you be to use an app or website to offer your accommodation to tourists?

Availability	Frecuency
Very willing	2
Willing	4
Indifferent	2
Not very	2
Not at all	2

Source: Own Elaboration

It can be observed that there is moderate interest in the development of the application, although it should be noted that the age of some hosts causes a digital divide.

Box 15

Table 13

2. What features do you consider most important for the platform to have? (Select up to 3)

Features	Frecuency
Availability calendar	5
Photos and description of the accommodation	5
Selection of number of guests (adults/children) or pets	4
Payment methods	5
Chat with guests	3
Reviews and ratings	4
Booking notifications, messages	4
Promotion within the platform	2
Registration of events or cultural activities	4

Source: Own Elaboration

This question is fundamental because it lays the foundation for what local hosts consider necessary to offer their service.

Box 16

Table 14

1. Would you prefer to use the platform as a mobile application, website, or both?

Preference	Frecuency
Mobile application	0
Website	0
Both	10

Source: Own elaboration

Source: Own Elaboration

All hosts believe that offering both options for interacting with the application is best for its use.

Box 17

Table 15

1. Would you be willing to pay a commission or fee for using the platform if it generates bookings for you?

Availability	Frecuency
Yes, booking fee	3
Yes, monthly fee	8
I would not be willing	1

Source: Own Elaboration

It can be seen that 10/11 of the hosts are willing to pay for the service.

With these preliminary ideas from potential users, the PMV was designed based on the recommendations made by potential users.

Product

Based on the surveys, it was determined that the PMV should include at least:

Service

Photo gallery, accommodation details, availability calendar, reservations in addition to the platform by email, telephone, social media, payment methods, chat, reviews and ratings, notifications, advertising space.

Administration

Host registration and validation, income statistics, advertising management, and additional tourist services (events, pottery routes, gastronomy, embroidery, local festivals, and traditional ceremonies).

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The regulatory framework for the services offered: privacy policy, terms and conditions of service, and cancellations.

An app with a PWA (Progressive Web App) approach, in order to offer both a web and mobile version in the prototype.

A verification entity that provides certainty about the information shared (photos, identity and security of the provider and the spaces).

The colour palette features the typical and characteristic colours of local crafts, which give the region its identity.

Figure 1 shows the initial interface of the application.

Box 18

Figure 1
Calli initial interface

Source: Own Elaboration

Measure:

It was in Xantolo in 2025 that the application was once again presented to a group of tourists for their opinions:

Considering a finite population of 380 units of analysis, a calculation was made with a 5% error and a 95% confidence level.

$$n = \frac{\mathrm{NZ}^2 pq}{(N-1)e^2 + \mathrm{Z}^2 pq}$$

Where:

n = Sample size to be calculated
N = 380 units of analysis.
Z = Standard deviation according to the confidence level
P, Q = The proportion of expected variability, 0.5
E = Margin of error

From this, it was found that:

$$n = \frac{(380)(1.96)^2(0.5)(0.5)}{(379)(0.05)^2 + (1.96)^2(0.5)(0.5)}$$

For a
N = 380
Z = 1.96 (for 95% confidence)
e = 0.05 (margin of error of 5%)
p = 0.5
q = 0.5

This determined a sample size of 191.0 units of analysis.

However, due to logistical limitations, non-probabilistic convenience sampling was chosen [Hernandez Sampieri, Fernandez Collado, & Baptista Lucio, Research Methodology, 2007], adjusting to 50 units of analysis.

$$E = Z\sqrt{\frac{p}{q} * \frac{N-n}{N-1}}$$

Replacing
N = 380
n = 50
Z = 1.96
p = 0.5
q = 0.5

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This sample size offers a margin of error of approximately 12%, which is considered adequate for exploratory studies and technological design proposals aimed at investigating general trends rather than precise population parameters [Hernandez Sampieri & Mendoza Torres, Research Methodology: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods, 2023].

Therefore, a sample of 50 tourists was surveyed on their use of the application.

With regard to the hosts, the entire population was surveyed, i.e. 12.

Learning

During the testing phase, efforts were made to keep the time short (no more than 5 minutes) to test the functionality, usability and design of the application for both tourists or potential users and hosts.

With regard to functionality, the following were evaluated: registration and login, search and filtering of results (calendar, room type, type of occupants), reservations, payment methods and cancellations, reviews and ratings, and updating availability.

With regard to usability, criteria such as ease of use, intuitive navigation flow to complete a task, clarity of text and images, and app feedback were evaluated.

With regard to design, colour harmony, readability and visual hierarchy were observed.

Tasks were set according to the participation profile:

Tourists or potential users were asked to: search for accommodation using filters, view photos, check prices, make reservations and receive confirmation, post reviews, and use the app offline.

Those offering a service (hosts) were asked to:

Register accommodation, upload photos, mark availability, check statistics, and accept or reject reservations.

A verification role was also defined in order to give visibility to the information displayed by hosts, with the aim of offering security and certainty of the information, after verification.

A short survey was administered to both groups, which included the following questions:

With regard to functionality, they were asked:

Box 18

Table 16

The application functions correctly and enables me to perform my tasks without errors.

Criterion	Tourists	Hosts
Strongly agree	7	2
Agree	26	5
Neither agree nor disagree	10	3
Disagree	4	1
Strongly disagree	3	1

Source: Own Elaboration

With regard to usability, they were questioned.:

Box 19

Table 17

I find it easy to use the app and find what I need.

Criterion	Tourists	Hosts
Strongly agree	6	3
Agree	22	5
Neither agree nor disagree	11	2
Disagree	6	1
Strongly disagree	5	1

Source: Own Elaboration

In pursuit of efficiency, questions were raised about:

Box 20

Table 18

I can complete tasks (search/book/publish/manage) quickly.

Criterion	Tourists	Hosts
Strongly agree	9	3
Agree	24	6
Neither agree nor disagree	10	2
Disagree	5	1
Strongly disagree	2	0

Source: Own Elaboration

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With regard to visual design, he asked himself:

Box 21

Table 19
The visual design makes the application easy to use

Criterion	Tourists	Hosts
Strongly agree	5	3
Agree	21	5
Neither agree nor disagree	16	2
Disagree	4	1
Strongly disagree	4	1

Source: Own Elaboration

In order to gain an overall view of perception, the following question was asked:

Box 22

Table 20
Overall, I am satisfied with my experience using this application

Criterion	Tourists	Hosts
Strongly agree	8	3
Agree	27	6
Neither agree nor disagree	12	2
Disagree	3	1
Strongly disagree	0	0

Source: Own Elaboration

Results

These results give us an overview of the palpable need where hotel capacity is exceeded, which is why there is a proposal for Calli, a digital platform that, through a network of hosts, offers an inclusive, practical, and secure technological solution so that individuals in the municipality and the region can register their accommodation offers throughout the year, considering that the demands of users of accommodation services have also changed [Calza Quishpe, 2025] and are looking for options to choose freely. This is where *Calli* comes in.

However, we must also be aware that there will be a very large sector of the population that is not yet ready to make use of these proposals [Leite Farias, Alexandre Silva, & De Azevedo Barbosa, 2019].

New travellers – millennials – seek experiences and spaces with connections. This promotes a healthy local economy and benefits businesses that derive from tourism. Millennials plan their trips using mobile devices and attach importance to comments on social media, giving rise to the collaborative economy [Fonseca Saldaña & Estela Estela, 2020].

One aspect to bear in mind is the regulatory framework for these service providers of this form of accommodation, which has revolutionised the sector, so the implementation of administrative controls is an issue that needs to be addressed [López Sánchez, 2021].

Conclusions

It is important to mention that, based on a regional need in the economic and social environments within the Huasteca region of Hidalgo, the feasibility of developing a platform that brings together and transforms an economy, in this case the hotel industry, has resulted in the *Calli* platform. According to the data collected in the surveys that support this application, This can be scaled up to other economic aspects, such as the gastronomic, tourism and craft sectors, all of which lead to a complete experience through the platform that focuses on the search for spaces not only for accommodation, but also for adventure, culture and regional gastronomy.

According to these results, and although international accommodation platforms already exist, this business model brings together people who can provide accommodation services according to their means with those who are looking for places to stay in an easy, safe and, why not, more economical way.

The development of the Calli Platform seeks, in the first instance, to create a digital space that promotes the efficient, effective, safe and economical use of spaces, whether rooms, flats or houses, that are available for occupation during certain periods of time by tourists, mainly in times of high demand, thus providing a new option that allows for the maximum occupancy of these spaces, which until now have not been considered for this purpose.

Definitely, in order to lend or use this type of accommodation here in the region, a paradigm shift is required to access these services.

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Currently, there is another trend of innovation in accommodation through home swapping, i.e. free home exchanges for individuals and their families. The idea is to exchange homes so that everyone can enjoy and get to know the best of the other place. It is an equitable cultural exchange open to all [Suarez Ramírez, 2017]. So the challenge of using the platform involves not only a technological intervention, but also a change in the way these services are appropriated.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest. They have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the article.

Contribution of the authors

Felipe Redondo, Ana María: Contributed the research idea, project leader for the application.

Del Carmen Morales, Yucels Anaí: Contributed to the design of the data collection instrument for hosts and the analysis of this data.

Del Carmen Morales, Heidi: Contributed to the design of the data collection instrument for potential customers and the analysis of this data.

Núñez Cárdenas, Felipe de Jesús: Contributed to the design of the data collection instrument and its analysis; also coordinated the data collection with his students.

Availability of data and materials

The collected data are available for consultation upon request to the corresponding author.

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7th semester students of the Bachelor's Degree in Administration at the ESH of the UAEH.

Abbreviations

PMV	Minimum Viable Product
PWA	Progressive Web App
UTHH	Huasteca Hidalguense Technological University
UAEH	Hidalgo State Autonomous University
ESH	Huejutla Higher Education Institution

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Background

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