



Territorial Brands' Uses of the Image of the Alps



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Introduction

Territorial Brands (TBs) are territorial development initiatives that provide quality signals to clients, reassuring them of the local origin of products and services.

- Unlike Geographical Indications and the quality term 'mountain product', TBs are not recognized at the EU level. They are voluntary certification schemes regulated at the national or regional/local level or run by private operators.
- They can be based on a self-declarations or rely on a certification scheme with a third-party verification procedure.

Many Territorial Brands exist in the Alpine space. Previous EUSALP initiatives and projects highlighted their role as policy instruments for sustainable territorial development in the Alpine space.

- The Alpine Space **AlpFoodway** project (2016-19) carried out an initial mapping of territorial brands in Alpine regions of France, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Germany and Slovenia, highlighting their contribution to safeguarding and valorizing the Alpine food heritage. The project recommended that TBs establish heritage-sensitive product specifications fostering collaboration across local value chains and the exploitation of synergies with the cultural, educational and tourism sectors.
 - In 2021, SUACI Montagn'Alpes and EURAC Research carried a EUSALP-supported **mapping of Alpine Territorial Brands**, identifying more than 20 initiatives in the French Alps, and more than 40 initiatives in the Alpine space. In 2022, ForTéa identified 28 timber labelling initiatives in the Alps. These studies highlight the diversity of Alpine TBs and their multiple goals and governance systems.
 - The biennial EUSALP **Territorial Brands Conference** (2019, 2021) has raised awareness among policy makers on the role that TBs can play to facilitate local economic development and transition to the circular economy.
 - The ARPAF-II project «**100% Local**» developed solutions for the establishment of TBs with product specifications favoring radically local value chains, with products made with local raw materials and entirely processed locally. These 100% local value chains can constitute a tool for territorial differentiation and competitive success for peripheral Alpine regions.
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Territorial brands are understudied and little is known about their impact on consumer choices.

- Academic work on place branding is fragmented across disciplines (geography, regional studies, marketing), and has so far neglected territorial brands providing signals on the local origin of products. Other typologies of place brands (city brands, destination brands, geographical indications) have attracted much more scholarly attention.
- Research developed in marketing and consumer research can however help territorial branding practices. Brands, when newly created, are like «empty vessels» that need to be filled with meanings thanks to promotional activities and other sources of meaning – including places of origin. Places have images that connote the products therein produced – even before a TB is formally created.

As a first step in its research activities, the ARPAF «Made in the Alps» project carried out an analysis of the commercial uses of the name and image of the Alps. We consider such image as a cultural resource that can be used to better promote products from Alpine value chains.

- Our goal was to evaluate the extent to which TBs as well as individual brands refer to the Alps in their names and logos.
- For a brand, using a name (trademark) referring to the Alps is a form of place branding. One can assume that if companies use such references, it is because the Alps have a positive and valuable image, likely to affect consumer choices.
- The image of the Alps can thus be seen as a cultural resource likely to add value to products and services from Alpine value chains. Promoting a product as ‘made in the Alps’ is however a market positioning, or the result of a conscious promotional choice.
- There can be products that are de facto ‘made in the Alps’ but adopt a different market positioning (for example, made with organic ingredients or the result of technological innovation or traditional know-how). Conversely, products made elsewhere could be promoted as ‘Alpine’ - a phenomenon of ‘cultural appropriation’ that we did not anticipate, but of which we found abundant evidence during our study.

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Our preliminary analysis of commercial uses of the image of the Alps is based on the following activities.

- A literature review on place brands (also known as ‘place of origin’ or ‘made in’ effect), with a focus on different scales (city, regional, the nation, supra-national areas) and their effects on consumer responses;
- Desk research on how the image of the Alps is used to promote local products by brands of different kinds;
- A more systematic content analysis of references to the Alps in trademarks and figurative logos, carried out based on data from the publicly accessible database TMViews.
- Data gathering and analysis were carried out by emlyon business school, under the supervision of professors Diego Rinallo and Marta Pizzetti, who are the authors of the present report. The trademark analysis reported in part 3 of the report was carried out by Ms Olga Nechaeva (University of Florence).
- Dr Erik Logar (ZRC SAZU), part of the Made in The Alps project team, also contributed to the intellectual work behind this report with his valuable expertise on territorial brands from a geographical perspective.

Acknowledgements

- We are grateful to participants to the Made in the Alps project virtual kick-off meeting (24-25 November 2022) for their constructive feedback, which shaped subsequent activities. Our thanks in particular to Ms Alice Beck (Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention) for bringing to our attention the case of Alpen muesli.
- We thank Mr Sylvan Guetaz (Région Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes, EUSALP Action Group 6 co-leader) for helpful comments during project presentations, and to Ms Anne Castex (Montagn’Alpes SUACI) for feedback on the project activities and for sharing with us previous studies and analyses on territorial brands from the French Alps and on consumer perceptions of Alpine products. Our thanks also to Mr Fabio Pesce (FORTEA) for sharing a report on local timber eco-labeling initiatives in the Alps.
- We would also like to thank speakers and participants to the third EUSALP International Conference on Territorial Brands (13-14 November 2023), for their feedback to the data here presented. In particular, we would like to acknowledge Mr Giancarlo Traina and Mr Alessandro Bevilacqua (Bellissimo) for sharing their insights on effective communication for territorial brands, and Prof. Cecilia Pasquinelli (University of Naples «Parthenope») for her thought-provoking presentation on alliance brands.

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1. What is the 'Made in' effect and why it matters: Insight from academic literature and applied studies



The ‘Made in’ effect in marketing and consumer research

Marketing and consumer researchers have long investigated how consumers react to ‘made in’ claims. Research on **place branding** is mostly based on a sociological and cultural understanding of markets and consumption. ‘**Country-of-origin effects**’ literature looks at consumer responses from a psychological perspective.

Work on **place branding** considers places as intangible reputation assets (or **cultural resources**) that can be used for a variety of purposes by various actors – including individual companies, territorial brands, destination management organizations, local and national governments, and other stakeholders.

- Individual brands, once legally constituted, are ‘empty vessels’ devoid of meaning. They can have a logo or well-designed visual identity, but when newly created they mean nothing to consumers. Brands acquire meaning as they circulate in the market, thanks to customer experiences and word-of-mouth; through messages diffused by the brands themselves through advertising and other promotional means, and by leveraging other sources of meaning.

- Places project images regardless of any conscious communication effort (Giovanardi et al., 2013). When a place is well-known and elicit favorable associations, local companies benefit from it. The image of the place is transferred to the image of the products made there. Companies can choose to deploy that image in their marketing communications (advertising, packaging, etc.) to benefit from positive place meanings. If a place is little known, there’s little advantage in highlighting one’s place of origin. When places of origin have negative connotations, companies should «shield» themselves by choosing different market positionings.

- Territorial brands – even before being legally constituted – also benefit from a place image. Well-known brands located in the area can also create a halo effect benefitting less known local companies. Even when the place is not well-known outside of its boundaries, it might elicit favorable responses in local consumers – if the local population is a key target market segment.

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The image of a place thus connotes the image of products made in that place (Fig. 1.1).

- The mechanism is defined in academic literature as an image (or meaning) transfer process (McCracken, 1989): the image of the place is transferred to the image of the products locally made. This process is automatic, if local firms emphasize their place of production is their promotion, even when a Territorial Brand does not exist.
- When a Territorial Brand is formally constituted, it acts as a mediator between the (previously existing) place image and the firms and products benefitting from it. The TB defines a product specification with criteria for inclusion of products/member firm, typically requiring that the processing is entirely or mostly local and that a given % of ingredients (up to 100%) is local. Other criteria can be set (for example, environmental responsibility or consistency with local traditions or productive know-how).
- When newly constituted, TBs' first mission is to ensure that a critical mass of local firms (typically, small and medium-sized enterprises) adhere to the collective territorial branding initiatives. If they fail in this mission, TBs risks becoming 'empty boxes' that formally exist but have little impact.

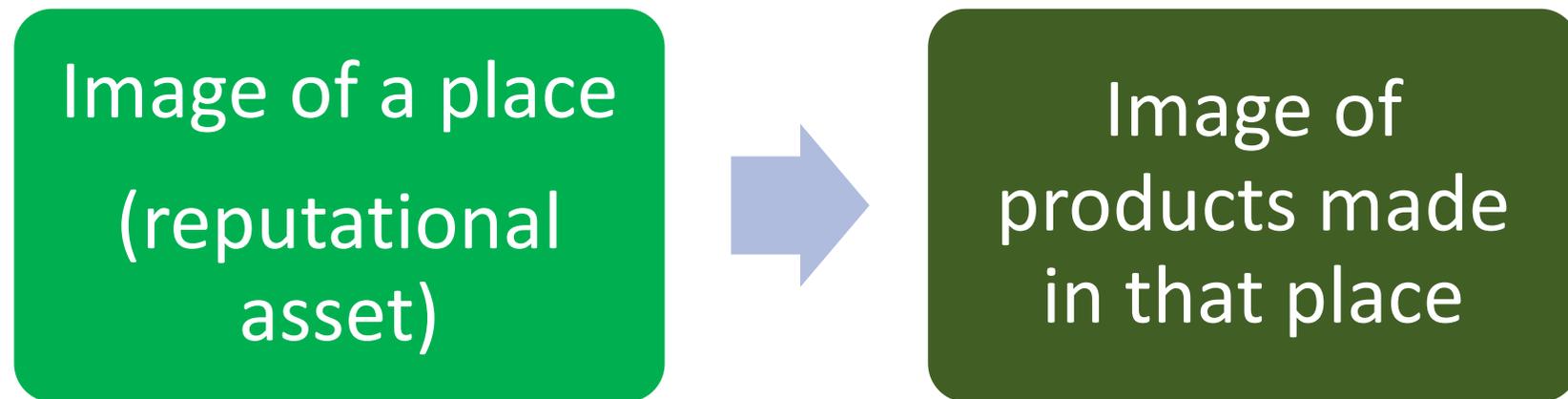
Inter-regional and cross-border place brands face additional difficulties respect to nation or regional brands.

- While regions often compete with each other, they can also collaborate – within one country or between countries. The EU has supported cross-border collaboration in all member states, with INTERREG programs and other tools. This can originate attempts at place branding at the cross-border level (Witte and Braun, 2015). In these cases, cross-border territorial branding initiatives might thus be motivated by fund-raising opportunities and political rather than entrepreneurial reasons. This might shape the way they are designed and implemented, and their outcomes.
- For example, local stakeholders and firms might find it harder to identify with an inter-regional or cross-border brand image. Once funding is over, this might threaten the survival of these place brands. Consumers, too, might respond more positively to nation or regional brands, and penalize products from inter-regional/cross-border value chain.
- Literature on inter-regional and cross-border place brand is very limited (see Zenker and Jacobsen, 2015 for an exception). Networks of places cooperating under an umbrella place brand or alliances among territorial brands (Pasquinelli, 2011, 2013, 2023) are possible solutions for inter-regional cross-border place promotion.

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Figure 1.1 – The image transfer process in place-based branding



Source: Adapted from McCracken (1986)



Literature in consumer psychology mostly conceptualizes ‘made in’ as the «country-of-origin effect» (COO effect), or the «[o]verall perception that consumers form on a product from a particular country, based on their prior perception of the country» (Roth & Romeo, 1992).

- These perceptions have both a cognitive and emotional component, generated by the personal experiences of the consumer with the country, and/or by targeted marketing communications (Chen et al., 2014).
- The COO mechanism is simple: consumers hold certain ideas and beliefs regarding a country that are transferred and associated to the products made in such country. It can be described as a halo effect radiating from the place of production to the product – and, in some cases, viceversa (Saran & Gupta, 2012; Jo & Kim, 2014; Miranda, 2020).

This cognitive mechanism is mainly unconscious. The 30% of consumer tend to underestimate its relevance during their purchasing choices (Hertz & Diamantopoulos, 2017), but COO is a central product attribute that consumer consider when assessing a product before the purchase (Hoffmann et al. 2019).

- Indeed, it is a powerful mechanism that simplifies information processing and risk perceptions during the consumer’s decision-making process (Cheah et al., 2016).
- In other words, the ‘Made in’ is an information cue that suggests to consumers what is appropriate and desirable to be purchased in certain contexts and/or occasions.

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Studies on the ‘country-of-origin effect’ have investigated what are the characteristics of certain countries and geographical areas that may exert a positive effect on purchases.

- The proximity of the consumer with the place of production is pivotal: consumer prefers local brands (Balabanis et al., 2019), foreign brands that are locally produced (Bandyopadhyay & Banerjee, 2002), or products from geographically close countries (Jo & Kim, 2014).
- In such cases, studies have demonstrated that a positive «COO» increases consumers’ purchase intention and willingness to pay (Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012; Samiee & Chabowski, 2021). It means that when consumers hold positive beliefs regarding a country, they are more eager to buy products made in such country, and even keen to pay more for them.

The «COO» is also influenced by the country’s perceived expertise and competence in certain domains (e.g. wine production, or precision mechanical engineering), which is likely to boost the perceived quality of the products (Koschate-Fischer et al., 2012).

- For example, France is often associated to elegance and craftsmanship: these characteristics, often based on stereotypes, are transferred to French products, which might be perceived as elegant and high quality.
- The COO effect can also be negative. While Italy is considered a country whose companies have skills in the domain of fashion, most consumers would not regard Italy high in terms of precision mechanical engineering.

Ensuring that consumers are able to associate a brand to the right COO, or in general to classify a product as related to a country, is of paramount importance, since a lack of classification has adverse consequences, such as a decrease brand attitude and consumer purchase intentions (Balabanis & Diamantopoulos, 2011).

- In this vein, companies employ different strategies to communicate the «COO» in order to leverage on its positive effect on consumers.
 - A study reveals that about the 40% of the examined brands use at least one COO marker, that could be the ‘made in’, or by embedding the COO in the brand name (Hornikx et al., 2020). The ‘made in’ is particularly relevant for low involvement products, or when the consumer is not familiar with the product, such as for the case of new products.
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Theories on «COO» have recently further developed to better describe the complexity of today's value chains, which often span multiple countries. Traditionally, «COO» refers to the country where the product is designed, and it is now accompanied by the «Country-of-Manufacture» (COM), i.e. the country where the product is assembled or manufactured (Arora et al., 2016). The «COM» also carries meanings and contributes to the perceived image of the product.

- When consumer perceive that «COO» and «COM» share similar characteristics (i.e. their images are congruent and matching), the product is perceived as more authentic (Arora et al., 2016), and consumers assign greater quality to the product (Sichtmann & Diamantopoulos, 2013).
- When «COO» and «COM» do not fit, such lack of consistency may generate ambiguity and reduce consumers' product evaluations (Johnson et al., 2016). However, consumers tend to rely mainly on the «COO» (Arora et al., 2016; Ahmed and d'Asous, 1996; Sichtmann & Diamantopoulos, 2013), on which companies tend to leverage (Johnson et al., 2016).
- Notably, when brands change the production location of a product, i.e. the «COM» is no longer the same of «COO» (for example, in the case of offshoring), they may alienate certain consumers (Felix and Firat, 2019).

Another layer of complexity is added by the origin of raw materials, i.e. the place from which raw materials are acquired. The COO of raw materials is particularly relevant in luxury domain, since it may signal the high quality, rarity and genuinity of them (Cheah et al., 2016).

To conclude, while COO literature focus on countries, its insights can be generalized to other geographical scales - smaller or larger than the nation.

- Some work exists focusing on Region-of-Origin effects, supporting the view that COO effects also operate at the regional level (Chamorro et al., 2015; Clifton, 2014).
 - Place-of-origin effects can also exist at the supra-national level – for example, work exploring the impact on consumer preferences of 'Made in Europe' or 'Made in the EU' (Diamantopoulos et al., 2017).
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Why does «Made in the Alps» matter for the Alpine region?

Cross-border collaboration in the Alpine region is one of EUSALP's *raison d'être*. Previous EUSALP's initiatives on territorial branding have however emphasized 100% local value chains. These are feasible in the case of agri-food products, but more problematic for more complex value chains that require international division of labor.

- Some value chains are technologically complex. Often, specific regions or countries specialize in specific stage of the value chain thanks to shared infrastructural investments. The resulting territorial specialization permits to lower costs (economies of scale) but require sufficiently large markets (beyond the local region or country) to be profitable.
- For these value chains, the 100% Local approach would not be economic. Territorial specialization implies trade and collaboration at the supra-regional (and often, international) scale.
- Globalized value chains are increasingly scrutinized for their negative social and environmental impacts. International collaboration in the Alpine space might generate the economic benefit of territorial specialization with more limited environmental impacts and ensuring fair work conditions.

Despite the fact that no 'Made in the Alps' quality label or collective brand exist, the Alps – like other places – project a strong image that can be considered a *de facto* place brand capable of facilitating cross-border collaboration.

- At the EU level, a «mountain product» quality term exists, launched in 2012 to help mountain producers better promote their products. A collective trademark or voluntary scheme covering the Alpine space does not exist, nor is advocated by the 'Made in the Alps' project. Products from cross-border value chains may however use the common image of the Alps as a promotional asset.

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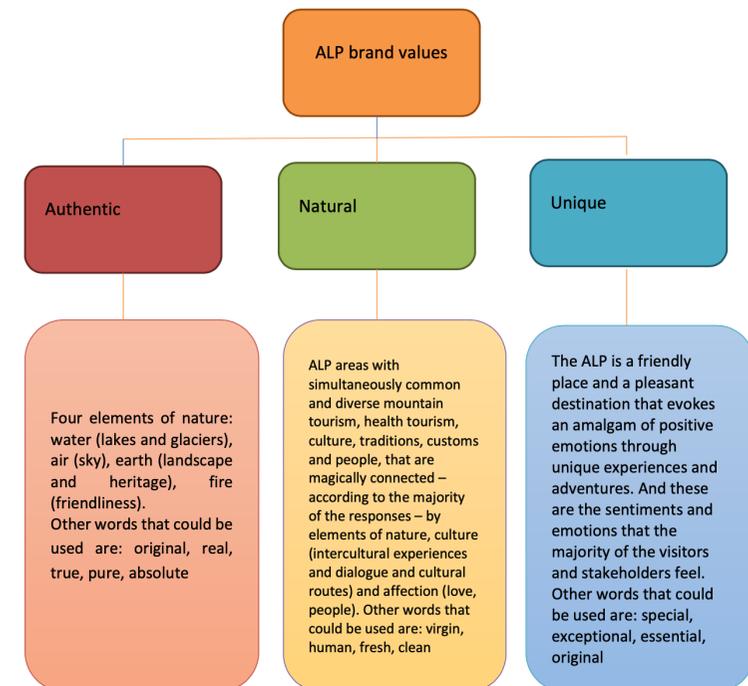
Limited applied work exists on the image of the Alps as a place brand.

The Routes4U project (2020) carried out a brand audit of the Alps as a destination brand based on mixed methods (surveys, questionnaires, focus groups). The study highlighted that the Alps' image revolves around nature combined with culture and positive experiences and affective and aesthetic emotions.

Based on their findings, the Routes4U project recommended that Alpine tourism promotion should reinforce these perceptions and communicate the Alps as authentic, natural, and unique (see Fig. 2).

While this study does not focus on the transfer of this image to products and services 'Made in the Alps', its findings constitute a first attempt at identifying key elements of the image of the Alps that should be deployed in promoting tourist experiences, such as routes.

Figure 1.2 – The Alps as a tourist brand



Source: Routes4U (2020), p. 19.

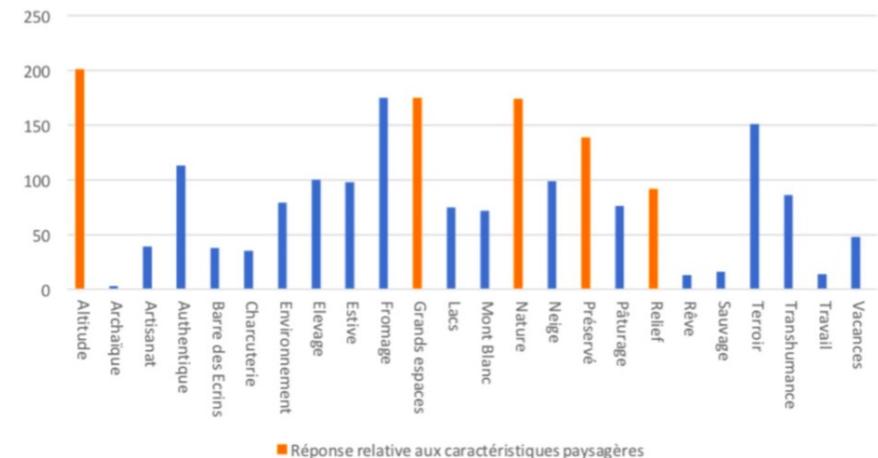


Another useful study was carried out in 2022 by the Agro school ISARA and SUACI Montagn'Alpes, with a sample (N=430) from the PACA Region (France).

According to the study, the Alps are spontaneously associated to its natural and productive landscapes, as well as its food heritage (see Fig. 1.3).

- Altitudes, nature, wide open spaces are among the most frequent associations. Snow, lakes, and specific mountains like Mont Blanc are also mentioned. The Alps' wilderness is also mentioned by some respondents.
- The Alps are also perceived to be authentic, well-preserved (for very few, even archaic). Some associate them to the holidays, even in the summer.
- Among the few products associated to the Alps, cheese is top of mind, followed at distance by charcuterie and, more generically, crafts. Some mention the term terroir, referring to a mix of know-how and natural factors affecting the taste of food.
- Some terms also hint at productive landscapes (*alpages*, the high-mountain pastures) and activities (breeding, transhumance).
- The Alps are also perceived to be authentic, well-preserved (for very few, even archaic). Some associate them to the holidays, even in the summer.

Figure 1.3 – Words associated to the Alps



Source: A. Castex, C. Romette (2022), «Retour des enquêtes consommateurs et distributeurs sur la mention montagne», *Séminaire Valoriser les viandes de montagne*, Sisteron.

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The study obtained a more nuanced insights through qualitative interviews with a sample of N=16 consumers.

The Alpine imaginary is linked to the senses.

- Colors include the white of snow and glaciers, the green of meadows, and the blue of skies.
- Taste is associated to cheese, milk, white wine and spirits (genepy), honey, charcuterie, herbs (verveine) and wild fruits (blueberries, raspberries).
- Recalled scents include flowers, hay, and fir trees.
- The most evoked sounds are the flowing of rivers, the Alp horns, and the bells.

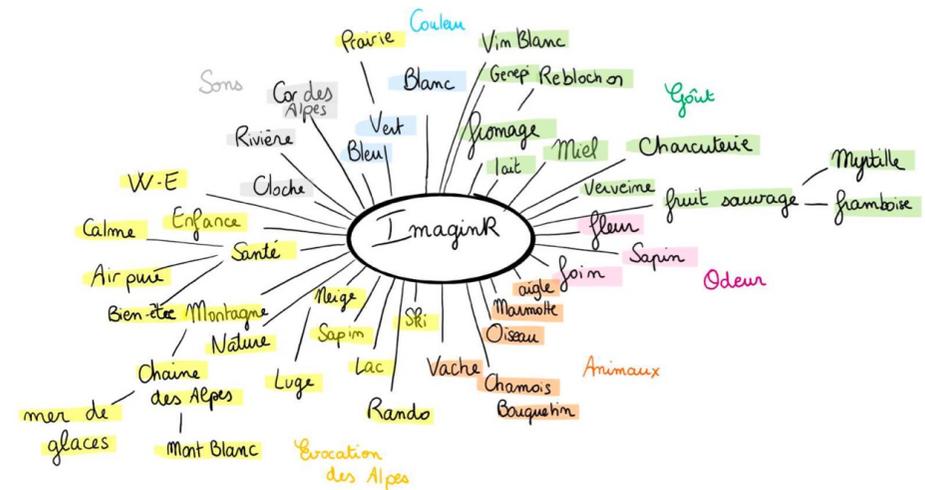
The Alps also recall (mostly) wild animals.

- Eagles, birds, marmots, chamois, and ibexes are the most frequently mentioned. Among the domesticated animals, only cows are recalled.

The Alps also evoke typical activities and perceived benefits.

- Among the activities: skiing, hiking, and sledging.
- Among the benefits, health – which is linked to wellbeing, calmness, and pure air.

Figure 1.4 – Alpine imaginaries



Source: Source: Marinkovic, Tuzzolino and Huguert (2021), Maestro, Filière Viande des Alpes. ISARA & SUACI Montagn'Alpes.

When asked about Alpine agriculture, breeding and the practice of transhumance on high-mountain pastures is top of mind.

- Alpine breeding is mostly associated to cows and goats, and aimed at producing milk more than meat. The fact that Alpine livestock spends significant part of their times in the outdoors, according to the informants, make them happier than those who live their life in stables.
- Informants also emphasized the role of shepherds and the fact that the livestock mostly grazes grass on meadows or are fed with hay.
- Such is the dominance of breeding that the only other agricultural element mentioned is the vineyard, linked to winemaking.

Informants also extensively connote Alpine farming to respect of tradition and the environment, which result in a better quality and taste and greater authenticity.

- Alpine agriculture has, in the perception of informants, remained small scale, artisanal, managed by family businesses, and linked to traditional savoir faire.
- Alpine products are thus authentic, linked to their terroir, and offered through short circuits facilitating direct interaction between farmers and consumers.
- Not only Alpine agricultural practices respect the environment; given the low levels of pollution, these products are more natural.

Figure 1.5 – Words associated to Alpine agriculture



Source: Source: Marinkovic, Tuzzolino and Huguert (2021), Maestro, Filière Viande des Alpes. ISARA & SUACI Montagn'Alpes.

Many are the food products associated to the French Alps.

- Unsurprisingly, given the strong association between Alpine agriculture and breeding, milk and, even more, cheese are top of mind in consumer perceptions.
- Informants mentioned Savoyard cheeses protected by geographical indications, such as Beaufort, Reblochon, and Abondance, and – more generically – goat cheese. Also prominent are some cheese-based cheeses, such as fondue, raclette, and tartiflette.
- Various charcuterie products are also mentioned, such as ham and different sausage specialities (saucisse, saucisson, diots).
- Informants also consider typical of the Alps various typologies of fruits (blueberries, grapes, apples, and pears), a spontaneous herb (wild garlic), g n pi (a liquor made with an Alpine plant, artemisia), and honey.
- Beyond cheese and g n pi, the only other processed product associated to the Alps is crozets – a typology small square-shaped flat pasta made with wheat or buckwheat, originally from Savoy.

Figure 1.6 – Symbolic Alpine products

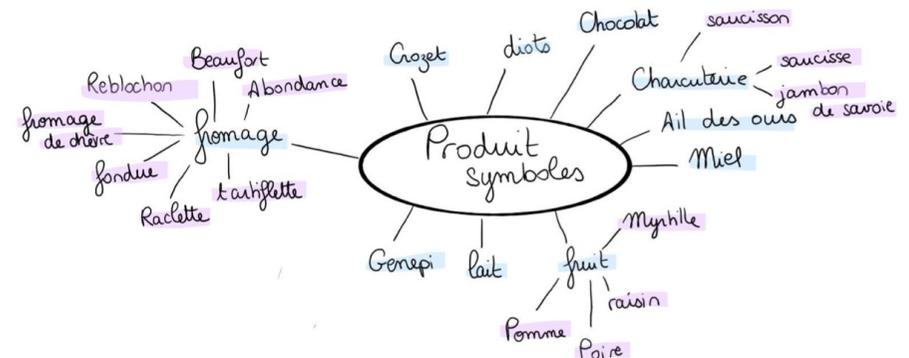


Figure 3 : Produits symboles des Alpes

Source: Source: Marinkovic, Tuzzolino and Huguert (2021), Maestro, Fili re Viande des Alpes. ISARA & SUACI Montagn'Alpes.



2. Commercial uses of the image of the Alps: Insights from a desk analysis



Reference to the Alps is not common among Territorial Brands in Alpine regions. There are however a few exceptions.

Most territorial brands adopt names identical or strongly associated to the geographical areas they cover, which often coincide with administrative borders.

- For example, in the Swiss Canton of Valais, the label *marque Valais* is established at the cantonal level.
- Natural parks also establish TBs. These sometimes span administrative borders (for example, they can cover natural areas in two or more adjacent regions).

Only a few TBs use reference to the Alps in their names, without however covering the entire Alpine macro-region.

- For example, in Switzerland, the association *alpinavera* promotes products for certified regional products from the cantons of Graubünden, Uri, Glarus, and Ticino.
- In the French departments of Haute Provence and Hautes-Alpes, the label *Pâtur'Alp* promotes mountain products from cattle breeders. The cattle spends at least 5 months in high-mountain pastures (*alpages*).
- Similarly, *Bois des Alpes* certifies wood from forests located in the French Alps, and processed by firms in selected French Alpine departments.

Figure 2.1 – Some Territorial Brands referring to the Alps in their names



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Some retailers have an offer focused on Alpine products.

In some regions, retailers or networks or retailers have emerged offering an assortment of Alpine products.

- **Sherpa** is a French group of 118 supermarkets located the Alps, Jura mountains, and Pyrenees. Its offer include both the major national brands and a selection of mountain products 'Terre de l'Alpe' (<https://www.sherpa.net/100-montagne>).

- **Le meilleur des Alpes** (the best of the Alps), is a group of 42 points of sales in the French department of Savoie, Haute Savoie and Isère, part of Système U, a French cooperative group of independent retailers. Their network of suppliers (situated in a range of 150km, including Switzerland) includes well-selected farmers and producers (<https://lemeilleurdesalpes.com/>)

- **Pur Alps** is a Swiss retailer born of the internationalization of the Italian retailer **Pur Südtirol**, whose assortment is focused on regional products from South Tyrol. When expanding in Switzerland, the company chose a new brand name with broader appeal. The assortment now includes both Swiss products and Italian products from Alpine regions.

Figure 2.2 – Examples of retailers with an Alpine product assortment



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Alpine references abound also in the case of individual products and brands— even when not ‘made in the Alps’.

A simple google search returns many products or brands whose names or claims contain Alpine references.

- These products are promoted under their own individual brands and are not part of territorial brands certifying the local origin of products.
- Reference to the Alps is sometimes justified by the brand’s product origin, place of production, or use of ingredients (example, candies with Alpine herbs).
- Other products can be based on traditional Alpine know-how or
- In still other cases, references to the Alps is used symbolically, to convey functional or symbolic benefits linked to product use. For example, a floor cleaner may have a fresh scent reminiscent of an alpine meadow.

Figure 2.3 – Examples of brands and products with Alpine references



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In some cases, the link between products labelled as Alpine and their material conditions of production is so tenuous that they can be configured as cases of cultural appropriation or even 'Alpinewashing'.

A case in point is that of Alpen, a muesli brand part of the Weetabix Food Company (UK). The product is not produced in the Alps or from ingredients made in the Alps. Benefits from its sales do not benefit companies located in Alpine regions.

- Here is the story of the brand, as told on the company website itself (<https://www.alpenfood.co.za/alpen-muesli/recipes/7>).
- «In 1971 Weetabix's marketing director was visiting Switzerland when he was served his first taste of Swiss style muesli during breakfast. He returned to create Alpen, based on Bircher-Benner's recipe and this has remained unchanged to this day».

Figure 2.4 – An Alpine brand which is not 'Made in the Alps'



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3. Alpine references in trademarks: Insights from a systematic content analysis



Methodology

Data source: *TMVIEW* (<https://www.tmdn.org/tmview/#/tmview>), the publicly accessible Trademark database maintained by the European Intellectual Property Office, which also covers trademarks from connected trademark offices from other parts of the world (> 120 countries).

Search criteria:

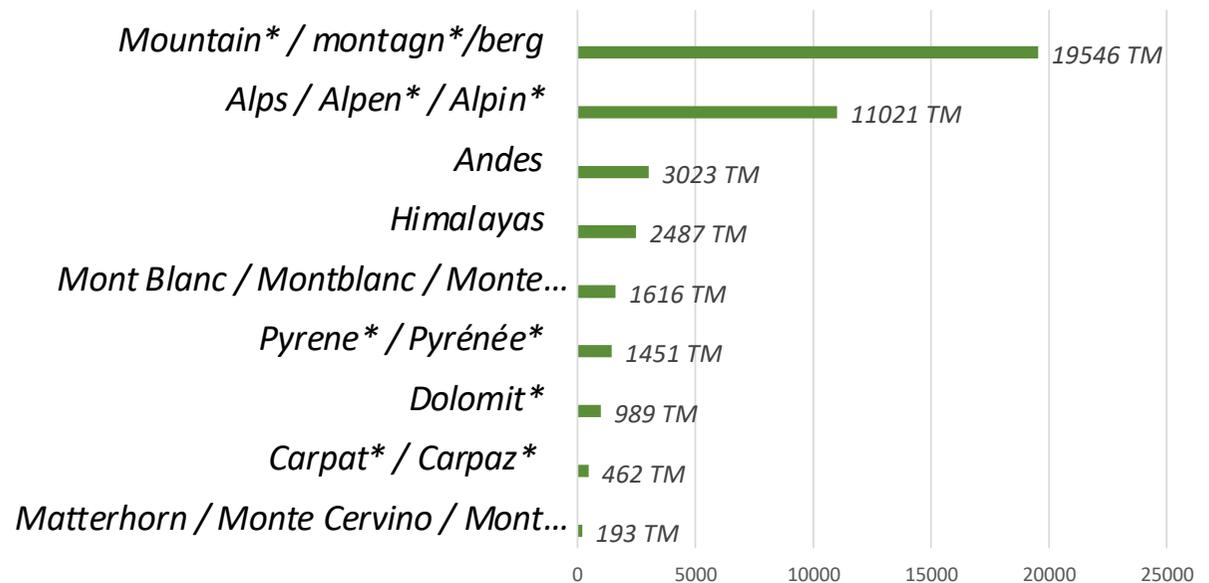
- *Keywords: “Alpin*”, “Alpen*”, “Alps” (and similar keywords in IT, D, FR, SLO)*
- *Geographic area: the world.*
- *Trademark status: only Active (filed and registered).*
- *We didn’t consider expired trademarks.*

Territorial Brands’ uses of the image of the Alps

More than 20,000 trademarks adopt the generic term 'mountain' (or related terms, in different languages).

Reference to the Alps is found in more than 11,000 trademarks. No other mountain range totalizes such a large number of hits.

Figure 3.1 – References to Mountains vs. the Alps vs. other mountain ranges in the surveyed trademarks



Source: Our analyses on TMVIEW data (2023)

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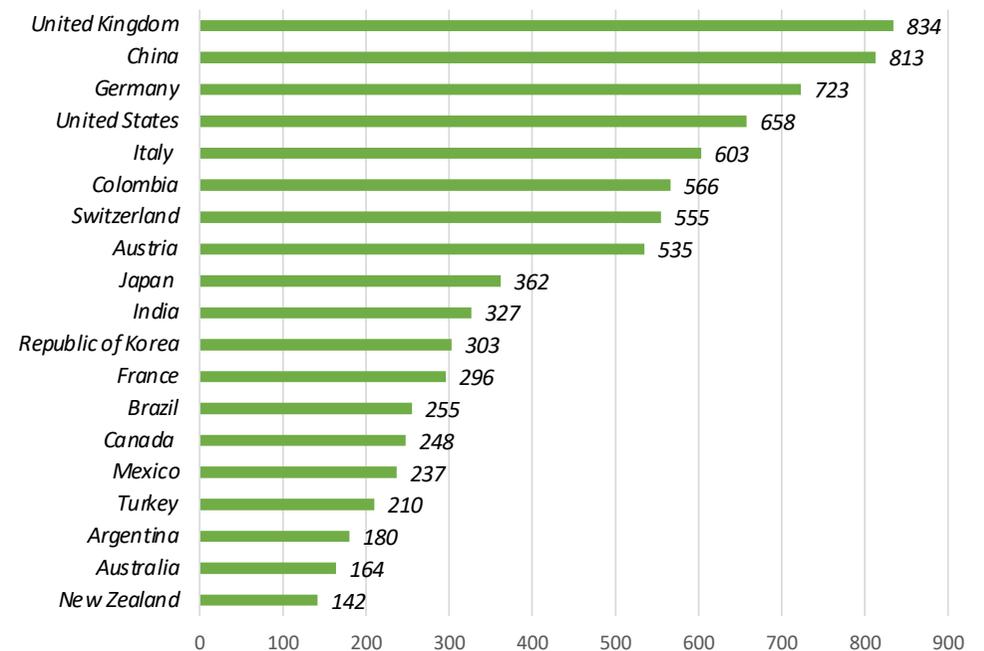
Trademarks with Alpine references are largely registered in non-Alpine countries.

- Top non-Alpine countries registering trademarks with Alpine references include UK, China, USA, Colombia, Japan and India.
- Among Alpine countries, at the top of the ranking is Germany, followed by Italy, Switzerland, Austria, and France. Slovenia registers less than 50 trademarks. The data available does not permit to verify whether trademark owners are located in Alpine or non-Alpine areas.

‘Alpinewashing’, or the appropriation of the Alpine image by companies without links to the Alps, is not however the only cause of this phenomenon.

- Companies from Alpine regions routinely register their trademarks internationally, to legally protect them outside of their country of origin. For example, many EU trademark owners registered their trademarks in the UK after Brexit, which explains the fact that the UK is at the top of the ranking.
- Alps-related terms are also connected to ‘Alpinism’, which is often used to referred to mountaineering taking place in other mountain ranges.

Figure 3.2 – Geographical distribution of trademarks with Alpine references (top countries)



Source: Our analyses on TMVIEW data (2023)

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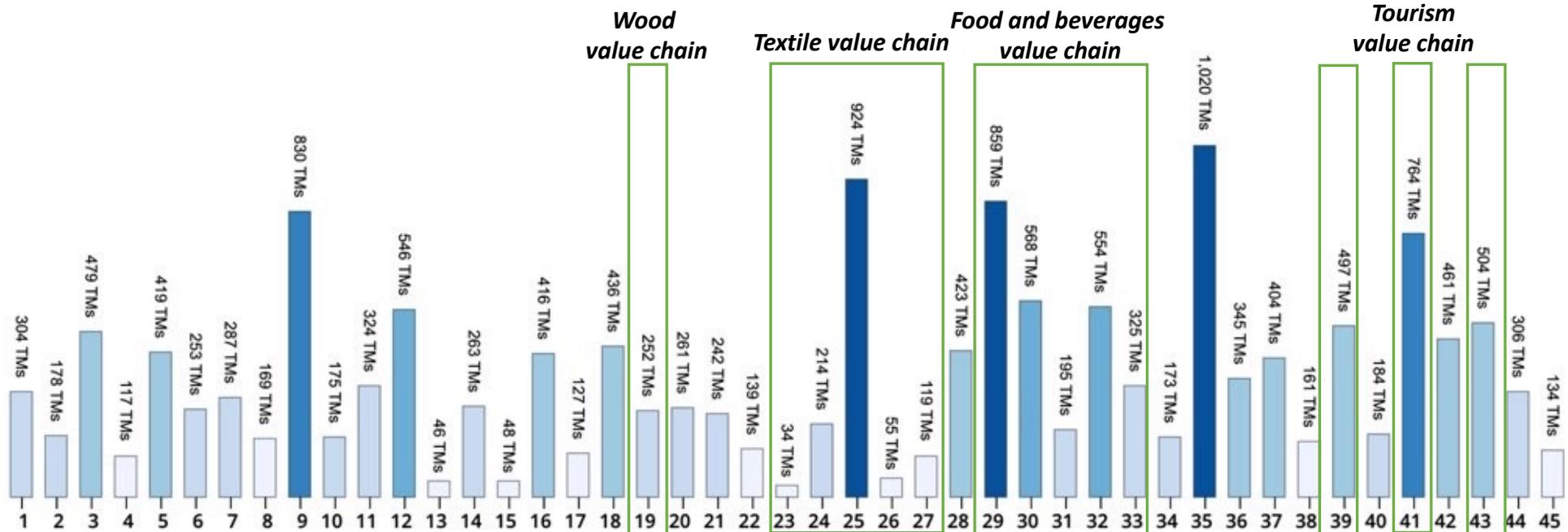


Trademarks with Alpine references are concentrated in food and beverage, textile, and tourism value chains (see Fig. 3.3).

- Trademarks are registered based on the Nice classification, comprising 34 classes of goods and 11 classes of services (see <https://euipo.europa.eu/ec2/classheadings/?niceClassLang=en>).
- Some of these classes are miscellaneous and of little interest given the goals of our analysis. For example, class 9, despite totalizing a relatively large number of Alps-related trademarks, refer to a very broad range of goods. Finer-grained analyses did not reveal a clear pattern. Similarly on the service front, class 35 refers to the broad categories of advertising, business management, organization and administration, and office function.
- Classes 29 to 33 refer to food and beverage value chains. Classes 23 to 27 refer instead to textile and clothing value chains. Classes 39, 41, and 43 pertain instead to tourist services (including restaurants, hotels and other forms of accommodation, and sporting and outdoors activities).
- Given the Made in the Alps project emphasis on traditional Alpine value chains, we carried out a finer-grained content analysis of classes 19, 25, 29, and 41. We matched trademark owners with product specialization, based on information available on their website. We excluded duplications (i.e., trademarks registered in multiple countries) and trademark with marginal relevance to the focal sector.
- In Figures 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6, we visualize the results of our qualitative analysis through word clouds. Larger font size imply greater word frequency.

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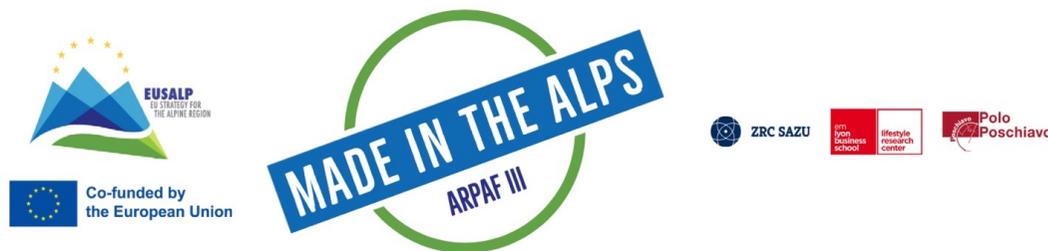
Figure 3.2 – Geographical distribution of trademarks with Alpine references (top countries)



Source: Our analyses on TMVIEW data (2023)

Sectors refer to the Nice classification covering 34 classes of goods and 11 classes of services.

See <https://euipo.europa.eu/ec2/classheadings/?niceClassLang=en>



As a final step in the analysis, we also carried out a qualitative analysis of Alp-related figurative logos.

Across all product categories, the image of a solitary mountain peak or a mountain range is the most common visual element in Alp-related brand logos (see Fig. 3.7).

Visual references to sports are also quite widespread (see Fig. 3.8). In this case, stylized figures of (male) skiers or climbers prevail.

Figure 3.7 – Examples of figurative trademarks featuring mountains



Figure 3.8 – Examples of figurative trademarks featuring winter sports



Source: Our analyses on TMVIEW data (2023).

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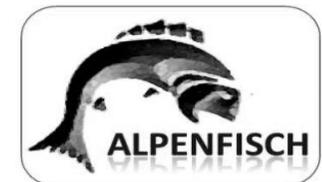


Natural elements, such as flora and fauna, recurs in Alp-related logos.

Among the flowers, the edelweiss is the most prevalent ones.

Among the animals, both domesticated and wild ones are present.

Figure 3.9 – Examples of figurative trademarks featuring flowers and animals



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Conclusions

Place image connotes the image of locally made products and can generate positive consumer responses, including a more favorable attitude and greater willingness to pay a premium price.

The Alps have a strong image that is transferred to products from different value chains. Based on the limited evidence available, consumers associate the Alps mostly to traditional agri-food products – cheese, but not only.

Figure 4.1 – The Alpine place image transfer process



Image of the Alps



Image of products
Made in the Alps



Alpine references are however used in trademarks beyond agrifood value chains – for example wood and textiles/clothing – and in a wide range of services. Such is the attractiveness of the Alps as a place image that even brands without strong links to the Alps use it – a phenomenon we termed ‘Alpinewashing’.

Today’s complex value chains often require territorial specialization and an international division of labor. Globalized value chains are today increasingly under scrutiny for their negative environmental impacts and unfair labour practices. Interregional and cross-border collaboration, can contribute to the relocation of manufacturing and crafts in the Alpine macro-region and to more environmentally and socially sustainable value chains.

Consumer preference for regional products or national value chains might however penalize cross-border value chains. In this context, the Alps’ shared image is a cultural resource that can facilitate the promotion of these products.

The Alps spontaneously project a strong brand image, which does not need the establishment of a formal ‘made in the Alps’ label covering the entire Alpine space. Cross-border value chains might also be facilitated by alliances among existing territorial brands.

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