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THE INFLUENCE OF CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT ON INTENTION TO DONATE BLOOD

Research necessity. Lithuania is committed to collect 100% of blood from unpaid donors by 2020, so free of charge blood donation needs to be advertised to attract blood donors. In such case, the research is done to testify effectiveness of national blood centre's advertisements that includes celebrities' endorsement. A research studies influence of celebrities' endorsement on donation type that was not studied before – blood donation.

Goal of the paper. To find out what is the influence of celebrity endorsement on intention to donate blood of Lithuanian speaking consumers

Objectives of the research. To determine fit between celebrity endorsers and the cause they promote, to test the relationship between source credibility on intentions to donate blood, to test if attitude towards the ad mediates the relationship between celebrity credibility and intention to donate blood, to test if involvement with the cause moderates the relationship between celebrity endorsement and attitude towards the ad and relationship between attitude towards ad and intention to donate, to compare the answers of respondents by their demographic characteristics to determine possible target audience of the advertisement that includes celebrity endorsement.

Value of the paper. The paper studied donation type that was not studied before in terms of celebrity endorsement technique. It was found that trustworthiness is the most important factor from source credibility construct for choosing a celebrity to advertise blood donation. It was discovered that involvement with blood donation plays an important role regarding intention to donate blood, thus, it is completely opposite than for other types of donations.

Methods of the research. Theoretical analysis was done through literature review. Quantitative research was selected, online survey was a method to collect data, so convenience sampling method was applied. The data is analysed using SPSS v. 24.0 software.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. The usage of celebrities in advertising of non-profit organizations

Opinion leadership is the transition of information from opinion leader to opinion seekers. Corey (1971) described that opinion leaders are people who are more involved in activities related to their topic, more informed about new developments in their topic, read more in the media related to

their topic. They influence opinion seekers by giving advice or recommendations, by serving as role model others can imitate, by persuading or convincing others. Sometimes it is done without opinion seekers' understanding that the message is intended to influence their behaviour (Weimann, 1994). Valente and Pumpuang (2007) noted that there are many different ways to choose an opinion leader that would be suitable for the campaign. One of them is to choose a

celebrity. Non-profit organisations (NPOs) rely on celebrities because they can be very effective fundraisers. They are visible, they can reach a wide audience and they know how to communicate with it (Valente & Pumpuang, 2007; Samman et al. 2009; Wheeler, 2009). Celebrities are used to support non-profits by raising awareness of the issues or funding with general public (Van den Bulck et al. 2010).

To achieve these goals, they must be credible. When credibility of communicator is high, people are way more willing to accept their message. If the source is less credible, people tend to reject their message and intentions (Grewal, Gotlieb, & Marmorstein, 1994). Most of the researchers studied source credibility (Hovland et al., 1953) that is measured by trustworthiness and expertise of the source. Ohanian (1990) added attractiveness construct to this model claiming attractive celebrities are more influential. Added to that, source attractiveness model (McGuire, 1985) is discussed in many papers (Till and Busler, 2000; Wheeler, 2009). The meta-analysis of Erdogan (1999) shows that majority of studies in terms of celebrity endorsers focus on celebrity attractiveness and credibility, product-celebrity match, message and product type, level of involvement, number of endorsements by celebrities, target receiver characteristics, and overall meanings (e.g. personality, values, standards), attached to celebrities.

Many researches proved that celebrity endorsers still have a great impact on people, but there are some conditions. Among all the studies, the work of Petty, Cacioppo and Schumann's (1983) on the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion was a huge step forward in understanding the influence of celebrity endorsers. The researchers insisted that there are two routes – central and peripheral - how the person gets the infor-

mation and acts according to it. If a person's ability/motivation to follow the message is high (so is the involvement), then he is concentrating on the message itself and follows the central route. If a person is at low level of involvement, he/she is focusing on the context of the message, reacts to the context, specific details, spokesperson of an advertisement and nonverbal signals within it, without cognitively processing the key message delivered to him/her. The above-mentioned authors concluded that the use of celebrities in advertising helps to form desirable consumer response, in the event that the information is received via the peripheral route. According to de los Salmones and Dominguez (2016), advertising with celebrities is more influential on people with low involvement than on with high involvement so it is crucial to study the involvement with the cause of the target audience.

All these theories were used to conduct a research. Celebrities play big role to influence people but it important to understand what are the other factors that influence donating behaviour.

1.2. Factors influencing donating behaviour

Most scholars agree that gender is a significant variable in measuring characteristics of donations, but it is still a question who is more willing to donate. Some researchers found that women donate more frequently and are more likely to donate money and time to charitable causes (Schlegelmilch et al., 1997a; Bekkers, 2010; Dvorak & Toubman, 2013). Louie & Obermiller (2000) reported that age is not a significant factor in charitable giving behaviour while others find correlations between age and donating behaviour. Nichols (1994) mentioned that young generation was in fact willing to

share its resources with charities more than older one. Bekkers (2010) specified that younger people are more likely to display intentions to volunteer. Pharoah and Tanner (1997) compared households and found that older aged households are willing to donate more than younger aged ones. The same study found that richer households are more involved in charitable giving than poorer ones. It was found that marital status and family size are affecting charitable giving in money habits more than in time-spending habits (Yao, 2015). Households with children were more likely to donate (Lee & Chang, 2007; Yao, 2015). Married couples were found to be more charitable as well compared to unmarried ones (Yao, 2015). Studies have found that education level can have impact on charitable donors (James, 2008), but they are not agreeing about the relations between education level and charitable giving. According to Schlegelmilch et al. (1997a), donors may be found among early schools' leavers and among people with higher education. On the same year (Schlegelmilch et al. (1997b) it was found that higher educated people actually donate more than donors with lower levels of education. Bekkers (2010) reported that people with higher level of education are more willing to volunteer, donate money and give blood than people having lower level of education. Bekkers (2010) found that people with higher wages are more likely to donate money but less likely to donate time. Her study draws the attention to previous experience as well as it has predictive value for intentions to donate. People who volunteered or gave money are more likely to volunteer if asked. Thus, people who gave blood are more likely to volunteer than to donate money (Bekkers, 2010). In such case, it is important to check previous donating experience of respondents.

Even if there are no concrete findings in terms on blood donors because most of the researchers focused on intrinsic motives rather than extrinsic ones, demographic variables play important role in determining what kind of people are willing to follow celebrity endorsers and have an intention to donate. This information is significant for segmenting potential audience of the advertising campaign and for targeting purposes. It should be helpful for non-profit organizations as usually they target majority of population which can be corrected by targeting the most promising audience.

2. METHODOLOGICAL PART OF THE RESEARCH

Many researchers (Wheeler, 2009; de los Salmones, Dominguez, Herrera, 2013; de los Salmones, Dominguez, 2016) were using real life examples to study the relationship between celebrity endorsers and behavioural intentions. This research is formulated by following such practice and it tests the effectiveness of local commercial of national blood centre of Lithuania. Video commercial used celebrity endorsers to promote blood donation. The commercial is in Lithuanian and its target audience is Lithuanian speaking consumers. This commercial was chosen due to its primary goal – to promote blood donation with clear call to action, and multiplicity of celebrity endorsers. Current commercial spreads same message in different words, calls to action, but each celebrity delivers different reason for that. Due to lack of familiarity with female endorsers, it was chosen to study only male, similar aged celebrity endorsers – Marijonas Mikutavičius, Žydrūnas Savickas, brother Pijus. This decision was made for narrowing down the need of comparisons between chosen celebrities and target audience.

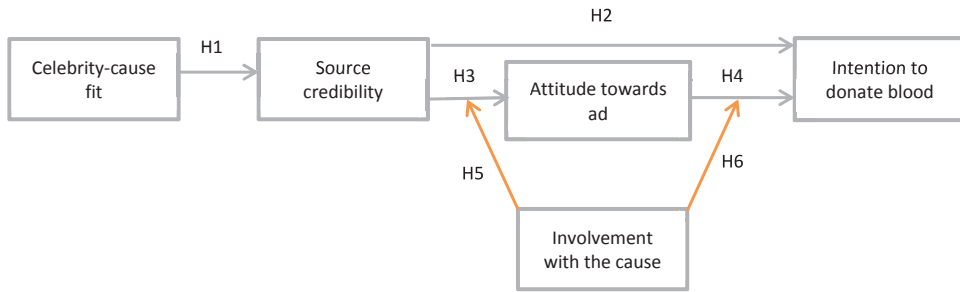


Figure 1. *Research model*

By following results of previous researchers six hypothesis were formulated:

- H1:** The fit between a celebrity and the social cause has a direct positive influence on perceived source credibility.
- H2:** A higher degree of source credibility has a direct positive influence on intention to donate blood.
- H3:** A higher degree of source credibility has a direct positive influence on attitude towards the advertisement.
- H4:** The attitude towards the advertisement is directly and positively related to intention to donate blood
- H5:** The relationship between celebrity credibility and attitude toward an ad will be stronger in highly involved individuals than in those with low involvement.
- H6:** The relationship between attitude toward an ad and intention to donate blood will be weaker in highly involved individuals compared to those with low involvement.

Compilation of all hypothesis forms a research model that is present in Figure 1.

2.1. Research design and sampling

For this research, the non-probability sampling method - the convenience sampling - was used. This sampling method

is the least costly in terms of time and money. Convenience sampling means that respondents who answered the questionnaire happened to be at the right time in the right place (Malhotra, 2008). After choosing suitable method for sampling, it is crucial to determine sample size. After comparison with previous relevant studies, the sample size for this research can be determined by taking an average of these sample sizes. In such case, the sample size is 342 respondents. Usually marketing researchers chose confidence level of 95% which means that 95% answers are lying in this confidence interval. This level is chosen for this research as well. If the confidence level is 95%, then standard error associated with chosen confidence level (z score) will be 1.96. The online survey was chosen as the most suitable form for this research because the purpose of this research is to understand common consumer behaviour. Online survey is suitable to collect lot responses in relatively quick time and it is one of the most popular forms of research when using convenience sampling method. Each respondent is asked to fill a survey by exposing him with three ads. After watching each ad, a respondent is asked to answer questions about the celebrity, the advertisement and his behavioural intentions. After watching all three ads, the respondents are asked to provide personal information

(demographic characteristics). The online questionnaire was created on apklausa.lt. Data was collected in the period from 29th of April to 4th of May, 2017.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

3.1. General results

According to De los Salmones and Dominguez (2016) respondents' involvement with the cause an endorser is promoting can be a moderating variable of source credibility-attitude towards the ad and attitude towards the ad-intention to donate relationship. Involvement with the cause was evaluated after watching all ads and its mean is rather neutral ($x=4.0130$). Additional tests were run to see if any groups of respondents are more involved with blood donation than others since Wolin (2003) mentioned there was a difference between genders' involvement. Few interesting points appeared after these tests. Results of independent samples T test ($p=0.000$, $F=7.420$) showed there is a difference between means of previous donors ($x=5.4600$) and non-donors ($x=3.6388$) Previous donors are more involved with blood donation than non-donors which seems pretty logical. Same test was applied to see if there is a difference between means of respondents having children and not. P value was significant ($p=0.043$) and it means respondents who have children ($x=4.6724$) are more involved with blood donation than respondents without children ($x=3.9561$). There were no more differences in terms of other respondents' characteristics such as gender, age, income, marital status and education level. Thus, further analysis is needed to understand involvement's role in celebrity credibility-attitude towards the ad and attitude towards the ad-intention to donate blood relationships.

3.2. Hypothesis testing

According to Erdogan, Baker, & Tagg (2001), one of the most important factors when choosing a celebrity for ad ranked by advertising agencies' managers was celebrity-product/brand match. Wheeler (2009) confirmed that celebrities who fit better with NPOs generate higher source credibility which influences intention to donate money and time. Added to that, de los Salmones, Dominguez and Herrero (2013) found fit between the source and non-profit cause directly influences source credibility. As source credibility was computed from trustworthiness and expertise in that research, it meant the better fit between celebrity and cause is perceived, the more expertise and trustworthiness is observed. However, source credibility factor is formed by adding attractiveness factor to trustworthiness and expertise which, hopefully, will not have any influence on overall results between celebrity-cause fit and source credibility.

H1 states that fit between a celebrity and the blood donation has a direct positive influence on perceived source credibility. Results show that regression coefficients of separate celebrities are positive and medium strong while computed celebrity-cause fit influences source credibility positively strong. Such results confirm H1. The better fit between celebrity and blood donation is perceived, the greater source credibility is found.

H2 is formulated accordingly stating that a higher level of source credibility has a direct positive influence on intention to donate blood. All standardized regression coefficients vary between 0.4 and 0.6 which means that there is medium strong positive relationship between source credibility and intention to donate blood. In such case, H2 is confirmed.

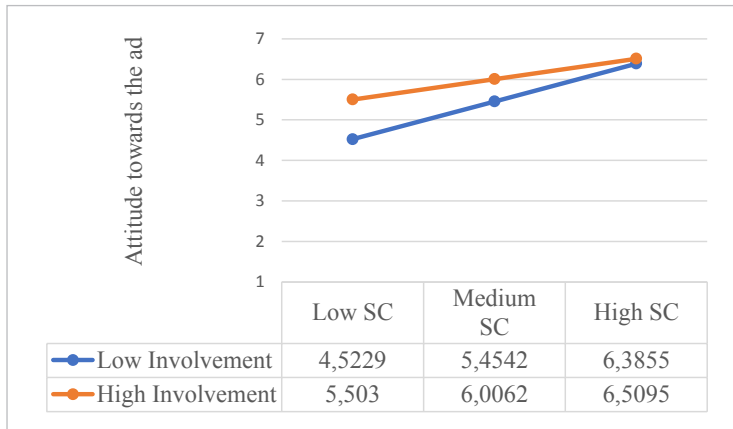


Figure 2. *Interaction effect of source credibility and involvement with blood donation on attitude towards the ad*

H3 is formed stating that higher degree of source credibility has a direct positive influence on attitude towards the advertisement. All the coefficients vary from 0.6 to 0.7 that claims that there is a strong positive relationship between source credibility and attitude towards the seen ad. Having such results, H3 is confirmed.

H4 claims that attitude towards the advertisement is directly and positively influences intention to donate blood. Attitude towards the ad – intention to donate regression coefficients of Marijonas Mikutavičius and Žydrūnas Savickas are varied between 0.5 and 0.6 which marks the attitude towards ads represented by these celebrities' influences intention to donate after watching these ads positively and medium strong. While attitude towards ad with Brother Pijus and overall attitude towards ads influence intention to donate blood positively and strongly as regression coefficient is bigger 0.6. In such case, H4 is confirmed.

Mediation. To see if attitude towards the ad completely mediates the source credibility-intention to donate relationship, the effect of source credibility on intention to donate

blood controlling for attitude towards the ad should be zero. Unfortunately, it is not true, so attitude towards the ad does not mediate source credibility-intention to donate blood relationship completely. However, if first three hypotheses are confirmed, it means a partial mediation exists on this relationship.

Moderation. An interaction (moderation) analysis determines if relationship between two variables is moderated (affected) by values of third variable. Involvement with the cause is moderating variable in the research model. Moderating variable was categorized to have two distinctive categories – low and high involvement. Following research of de los Salmones and Dominguez (2016), the sample was divided into two categories according to their involvement with the cause. 112 respondents (30.68%) answered to be low involved (involvement mean varies between 1 and 2.75) with blood donation, 113 respondents (30.95%) were highly involved (involvement mean varies between 5.25 and 7). 140 (38.36%) cases were eliminated having intermediate involvement (scored from 3 to 5).

If there is a significant relationship between independent variable and dependent

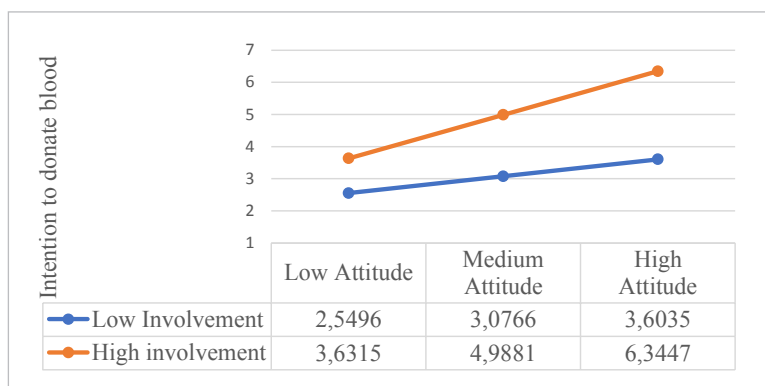


Figure 3. Interaction effect of attitude towards the ad and involvement with blood donation on intention to donate blood

(H3 and H4 confirmed that), moderation effect exists when significant variance is accounted for model where interaction variable is included. Linear regression is used to test the models. Later on, interaction effect needs to be measured and plotted. This step is done by using SPSS add-in PROCESS by Andrew F. Hayes. The procedure is repeated twice to test both hypotheses.

Examination of this plot showed as source credibility and involvement with blood donation increased, attitude towards the ad did not grow by same values. Respondents perceiving source credibility at low level having low involvement with blood donation perceived attitude the worst. When respondents do not trust the source, involvement has impact on attitude towards the ad as results of low and high involvement are different. At high source credibility level, respondents with high and low involvement perceived ad similarly. To check if the strength of relationship, regression was made by splitting outputs by categories of involvement. The results of regression shows that relationship between source credibility and attitude towards the ad is stronger in low involved individuals ($R^2=0.697$) than in those with high in-

volvement ($R^2=0.505$). This is opposite to hypothesis 5, so H5 is rejected.

These results are totally opposite to the ones got from the research of de los Salmones and Dominguez (2016). However, this can be explained by remembering that researchers studied behavioural intentions towards NPOs while this research studies totally different charitable giving type – blood donation. It shows that source credibility predicts attitude towards the ad and involvement with blood donation is important only when source credibility is low. In such case, marketers should rather increase source credibility than involvement with blood donation to increase attitude towards the ad with celebrity.

Examination of this interaction plot showed enhancing effect that as attitude towards the ad and involvement with blood donation increased, intention to donate blood increased. At low point of attitude towards the ad, intention to donate blood was more similar for respondents with low and high involvement with blood donation. Intention to donate blood was bigger when high attitude towards the ad and high involvement was perceived. The line of high involvement is steeper and it shows

its bigger moderating effect. To check if the strength of relationship, regression was made by splitting outputs by categories of involvement. The results of regression show that relationship between attitude towards the ad and intention to donate blood is stronger in high involved individuals ($R^2=0.684$) than in those with low involvement ($R^2=0.389$). This is opposite to hypothesis 6, so it is rejected.

These results are totally opposite to the ones got from the research of de los Salmones and Dominguez (2016). However, this can be explained by using different type of donation and remembering concern of Grace and Griffin (2006) noting that more involved individuals, donate more. The results show that attitude towards the ad predicts intention to donate blood and involvement with blood donation is important here. People perceiving higher attitude towards an ad and higher involvement are more likely to donate blood than people low involvement. In such case, marketers should rather target highly involved people showing them advertisements because they are the ones who are willing to donate blood.

4. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

This paper has several limitations, related with analysed literature, selected ads and measurement scales, sampling method and gathered data. First of all, hypotheses of this research were made according to few sources of literature, what might be not enough to give accurate and reasonable predictions, especially in case of involvement with the cause. Hypotheses that includes moderation are based only on one empirical research by de los Salmones, Dominguez (2016) and the results of this research contradict previous study. Secondly, the results of the survey were case sensitive, since respondents

reacted to particular given ads. In addition, advertisements were selected subjectively by the author of this paper and the messages of advertisements were not controlled, so the answers of respondents might be influenced more by exact messages transferred by celebrities than by their own being. All advertisements were in Lithuanian language, so the questionnaire was translated from English to Lithuanian which might have created some inaccuracies.

Moreover, gathered data was not normally distributed and results were calculated by using parametric tests, what also could evoke inaccurate findings. Selected sampling method is an issue as well since it is non-probability, convenience sampling and it is way less representative. Sample was not controlled by any variable such as gender or age of respondents which caused that majority of respondents were women. Thus, it is not possible to adjust the results of this research for all Lithuanian consumers and results are limited for this particular sample. Consumers' behaviour changes over time, so presented findings might not be the same after some time. It is especially relevant concerning object of this research – blood donation. Many respondents were aged less than 18 years which means they could not have given blood before as person can donate blood being above 18 years old. However, this is compensated by asking to determine only intention to donate, not actual behaviour. That could be a possibility for further research to extend the model by actual donating behaviour that could be predicted by intention to donate.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research investigated what is the influence of celebrity endorsement on intention

to donate blood of Lithuanian speaking consumers. Findings of this research are important for marketers, national blood centre and academic researchers.

Firstly, this research compared celebrities appearing in advertising campaign of national blood centre. It found that Brother Pijus was perceived to be the best fitting person for blood donation campaign compared to Marijonas Mikutačius (singer) and Žydrūnas Savickas (sportsman). Bekkers and Wiepking (2011) noted that more religious people are more altruistic and it raises their intention to donate blood, so finding of this research raise a question for further researchers to include religiosity of respondents into survey as it was not done in this research. Secondly, this research supported results of previous researchers stating that the better fit is between the celebrity and the cause, the more credibility of the celebrity is perceived.

Trustworthiness was found to be the most important factor in source credibility construct contradicting results of Wheeler (2009). In addition, Marijonas Mikutavičius scored the most in source credibility, but the most trustworthy endorser is the most important for blood donation campaigns. In such case, Brother Pijus was found be the most suitable person for such campaigns among three people tested. This finding leads to conclusion that blood donation as charitable giving type cannot be studied totally the same as money or time donations as it gives different results.

Research model of this paper was based on previous researches (Wheeler, 2009; de los Salmones, Dominguez, Herrera, 2013; de los Salmones, Dominguez, 2016) that focused on different types of donation. Though, this research found that source credibility predicts intention to donate blood as well as intention to donate money

or time. In addition to that, credible endorsers enhance advertising effectiveness (Eisend & Langner 2010), so higher level of source credibility increases positive attitude towards the ad. This research supported such implication. Added to that, attitude towards the ad predicts respondents' intention to donate blood as it was found by previous studies. This research found partial mediation of attitude towards the ad on source credibility – intention to donate blood relationship which was not studied before.

This study followed the results of de los Salmones and Dominguez (2016) and investigated if involvement with blood donation could be a moderating variable in source credibility-attitude towards the ad, attitude towards the ad-intention to donate blood relationships. De los Salmones and Dominguez (2016) tested intentions towards NPOs and found that relationship between source credibility and attitude towards the ad is more significant when people are highly involved. However, results of this paper are completely different. Relationship between source credibility and attitude towards the ad is stronger with low involved respondents and there is almost no difference in attitude towards the ad between high and low involved respondents when source credibility is at high level. It shows that source credibility predicts attitude towards the ad and involvement with blood donation is important only when source credibility is low. In such case, marketers should rather increase source credibility than involvement with blood donation to increase attitude towards the ad.

According to de los Salmones and Dominguez (2016), relationship between attitude towards the ad and intention towards NPOs was stronger in low involved individuals than in those with high involve-

ment. Though, findings of this research state totally different. Intention to donate blood was bigger when high attitude towards the ad and high involvement was perceived. At low point of attitude towards the ad, intention to donate blood was more similar for respondents with low and high involvement with blood donation. There results support concern of Grace and Griffin (2006) stating that consumers with high involvement, donate more. In such case, marketers should rather target highly involved people showing them advertisements because they are the ones who are willing to donate blood. Contradicting results regarding moderating variable should remind that different types of donations should be studied in different ways. As de los Salmones and Dominguez (2016) studied intentions towards helping NPOs, the results of their moderation are not applicable in terms of blood donation.

Yet, involvement with blood donation plays an important role in terms of intention to donate blood. It was found that previous blood donors are more involved with blood donation which is very logical. It is inter-

esting that respondents who have children were found to be more involved with blood donation as well.

The topic of celebrity endorsement on blood donation still has many angles to be researched. Researchers can focus on the influence of exact message of advertisement and how it impacts intention to donate blood. Current model can be broadened by adding actual behaviour predicted by intention to donate blood. In such case, the sample should be reduced to respondents of 18-65 years old as they can legally donate blood. Religiosity can be an important factor in terms of understanding source credibility and its influence to blood donation, so respondents could provide such information as well. Celebrities from different religions could be employed to test if there is any influence of that for perceiving them as trustworthy endorsers. Finally, this paper analysed how celebrity can help to non-profit but it is also interesting to check if the image of celebrity can change after his appearance in advertising campaign promoting socially responsible behaviour.

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