

GREEN CONSUMERISM

(KEPENGUNAAN HIJAU)

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Abstract

Green product is a product designed to minimize the environmental and human health impact. In recent years, consumers tend to pay more attention to the green products. Green consumers decision to purchase green products is becoming a central issue in the present state of green marketing research because of the rising of environmental consciousness and green consumption trends worldwide. Based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the intention of performing the specific behaviour (in this study purchasing green product) is influenced by three main components of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control. However, there are many factors that significantly affect the consumer's intention towards green purchasing. Among them are socio demographic variables, awareness, experience and knowledge about green products, parental influence and peer's belief, and product price and quality as well. Besides, after all, consumers express their concern towards the environment does not necessarily translate into green purchases. There seems having a gap between consumers' attitude and their behavior toward green products. It is thus clear that there exists a gap between consumers' thinking and actual actions.

Keywords: Green product, consumer, purchasing, attitude and behavior, actual actions

Abstrak

Produk hijau adalah produk yang dihasilkan untuk meminimumkan kesan terhadap alam sekitar dan kesihatan manusia. Dalam tahun-tahun kebelakangan ini, pengguna cenderung untuk memberi perhatian mendalam terhadap produk hijau. Keputusan pengguna untuk membeli produk hijau telah menjadi isu utama dalam penyelidikan berkaitan pemasaran hijau disebabkan peningkatan kesedaran alam sekitar dan trend kepenggunaan hijau di seluruh dunia. Berdasarkan Teori "Planned Behaviour" (TPB), hasrat untuk melakukan tingkah laku khusus (dalam kajian ini membeli produk hijau) dipengaruhi oleh tiga komponen utama iaitu sikap, norma subjektif, dan kawalan tingkah laku yang dilihat. Bagaimanapun, terdapat banyak faktor yang mempengaruhi niat pengguna terhadap pembelian hijau. Antaranya ialah pemboleh ubah demografi sosio-ekonomi, kesedaran, pengalaman dan pengetahuan tentang produk hijau, pengaruh ibu bapa dan kepercayaan rakan sebaya, harga produk dan juga kualiti. Selain itu, pengguna juga menyatakan keprihatinan mereka terhadap alam sekitar tidak semestinya diterjemahkan ke dalam

pembelian hijau. Justaru, wujud jurang antara sikap pengguna dan tingkah laku mereka terhadap produk hijau. Oleh itu, jelas wujudnya jurang antara pemikiran pengguna dan tindakan sebenar mereka.

Kata kunci: *Produk hijau, pengguna, pembelian, sikap dan tingkah laku, tindakan sebenar*

INTRODUCTION

Green or environment friendly products are products which reduce the negative effects on environment, are recyclable and reusable (IFIC (International Food Information Council), 2002). According to Albino et al (2009), green product is a product designed to minimize the environmental impact during its whole life-cycle, ranging from the acquisition of raw materials for production, distribution until purchase and post-purchase activities. In particular, non-renewable resource use is minimized; toxic materials are avoided and renewable resource use to take place in accordance to their rate of replenishment.

In recent years, consumers tend to pay more attention to the products that are environmentally and socially responsible as there are becoming educated and have a wide exposure to environmentally friendly products. Consumer's mindfulness about obliteration and depletion of environmental resources through irresponsible activities have outstretched the issue of environmental protection, consumption pattern and purchasing activities (Sharma & Iyer, 2012). Consumers who take into account the environmental impact on their consumption pattern and willing to change their purchasing behaviour can be regarded as green consumers (Ritter et al., 2015). Euromonitor (2008) defined; green consumers are those who are always purchase the product which bringing the less impact to environment consistently. These consumers may focus on brand product which is eco-friendly packaging and corporate who practicing the fair trade or environmental practices as well. Furthermore, Nik Abdul Rashid et al. (2009) explained that green purchase intention is conceptualized as the probability and willingness of a person which are prefer to purchase products that having eco-friendly features over other non-green products in their purchase considerations.

Green consumers decision to purchase green products is becoming a central issue in the present state of green marketing research. The purchase decision can be traced from the consumer's enthusiasm to support environmentally friendly companies (Laroche et al., 2001), performing the purchasing activities (Mishra & Sharma, 2010), putting into practice a sustainable consumption pattern (Young et al., 2010), and willingness to spend more money to acquire green products (Hasan & Ali, 2015).

Rising of environmental consciousness and green consumption trends have pointed to a critical need for consumer research for this emerging market. The growing consumer awareness of the environmental issue has changed consumption patterns towards sustainable products and services (Yang, 2017). As consumers have become increasingly aware of environmental concerns, they have more intention to purchase green products (Sinha, n.d). Moreover, prior research argued consumers are more likely to purchase eco-friendly products because of environmental and social benefits, and are willing to pay more for sustainable products (Sinha, n.d). Consumers purchase green products to minimize harmful environmental impacts by protecting natural resources, reducing energy use and waste and improving health and safety (Chan, 2001). Hence, international IEC 62075 standard was gazetted to incorporate environmental and other market demands.

The produce goods and services are used by the consumer for satisfying their needs and wants. The products those are manufactured through green technology and that caused no environmental hazards are called green products. In addition, a green consumer is one who is very concerned about the environment and, therefore, only purchases products that are environmentally-friendly or eco-friendly. Products with little or no packaging, products made from

natural ingredients and products that are made without causing pollution are all examples of eco-friendly products (Sinha, n.d.). Promotion of green technology and green products is necessary for conservation of natural resources and sustainable development (Yusuf and Fatima, 2015).

Yiridoe et al. (2005) demonstrated that the demand of green products is increasing day by day all over the world and as such there is concern for understanding how green is a green product. One of the most important restraints to the development of green products is the lack of consumer trust and the lack of information. This shows us that consumer's attitude and perception play an important role in promoting the green product. Since 1990, there have been myriad of research done on analysing the consumer attitude towards green products at academics as well as industrial level.

Even as thinking "green" is increasingly at the forefront of consumers' minds, they still struggle with their role in the lifecycle of products with an environmental benefit. Moreover, consumers seem to have limited capability to verify the liability of green products. Environmental concern and brand knowledge are likely to be both two critical factors that influence consumers' green products purchasing intention (Wheeler et al., 2014).

GREEN PRODUCT

In general, green product is designed or manufactured in a manner as to minimize the environmental impact involved in its production, distribution and consumption (Tomasin et al., 2013). This could involve the use of recyclable materials, biodegradable elements and components (Blengini et al., 2012; Wee et al., 2011). In fact, there are several characteristics that a product must have to be regarded as a "green" product (Tseng & Hung, 2013). Numerous criteria are presented below:

- Easily reused
- Made using natural and/or renewable resources
- Contains recycled content
- Readily recycled
- Biodegradable
- Energy efficient
- Durable with low maintenance requirements

To conclude, green products can be described as the products with less impact on the environment and less detrimental to human health than their alternatives (Shrum et al., 1995). The growing public awareness of the environmental degradation that has resulted in the operation of green marketing or environmentally-responsible practice for the firms in some industries. Some businesses engage in green marketing because such an emphasis will enable them to make a profit.

In business, the terms —Green product and Environmental product are used commonly to describe those that strive to protect or enhance the natural environment by conserving energy and/or resources and reducing or eliminating use of toxic agents, pollution, and waste (J. Ottman, 1997). It is also referred as a product that is environmentally preferable relative to comparable products.

Green Product in Malaysia

Currently, it can be noticed that the green consumerism is progressively moving to the developing countries (Tiwari et al., 2011), including Malaysia. In the context of this study in Malaysia, insofar, have focussed on the greenfirm's performance (Hasan & Ali, 2015), determinants of consumer attitude towards green products (Chen & Chai, 2010) and effective green marketing tools (ElhamRahbar & Nabsiah, 2011).

In Malaysia, the concept of environmentally friendly is quite new. Thus, Malaysian government has been making strong commitments towards environmental conservation, preservation and protection. For instance, Malaysia government has involved in promoting the going green conception through establish The Malaysian Green Technology Policy which is the nation's commitment to the vision of a Green Malaysia a reality. This policy serves to promote sustainable development and speed up the national economy by seeking to promote the right way for energy use. Moreover, to achieve that, the Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water (KeTTHA) was established in 2009 with intention to promote and encourage public utilization of green technology and consumption of eco-friendly products.

Other than that, the property sector also has seen the concern in environmental development which involved in the development of green buildings such as the G tower and 1First Avenue. Not only that, recently the Hypermarket chains like Jusco and Carrefour have adopted the No Plastic Bag Day policy on Saturdays and Sunday in order to reduce the reliance on plastic. The corporate sector such as Sime Darby and Digi has joined in with campaigns such as Plant a Tree Program and Mangrove-Saving Project respectively.

As Malaysia is marching towards becoming a developed and sustainable nation, much emphasis has been placed on the conservation of environment. Thus, the Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water (KeTTHA) implemented MyHIJAU Program (a Malaysian Government's initiative) in various with the Malaysia Green Tech Corporation as its partner.

MyHIJAU program is the Malaysian Government's initiative to support the development of green technologies. This program is introduced to encourage local manufacturers, producers and suppliers to produce green products and services that are more competitive in local and global market. The objectives of MyHIJAU program are identical to the Malaysian Government's most recent Sustainable Consumption and Production ("SCP") initiative.

Through MyHIJAU program, KeTTHA have been assisting SME to better employ green technologies to produce green products as they are still relatively new in Malaysia. From helping SME in marketing their green products to organising business matching for industries, KeTTHA's efforts enable enterprises to employ green technologies much more easily and cost effective than ever.

Through MyHIJAU Labelling as well, KeTTHA is helping consumers to identify environmental friendly products by labelling them with the respective Government Agencies' logos. Therefore, consumers will be able to point out products that are eco-friendly right away without having to search high and low. KeTTHA has provided a virtual database called MyHIJAU Directory that's easy to navigate which includes detailed information on green products and services in Malaysia. These listed green products and services are also recognised by the MyHIJAU Labelling.

According to Mei et al. (2012) attitude towards the environment and peer pressure are influential factors to green purchase intention in Malaysia. There are some companies who are not only concerned about making money but also the future of the earth. Below are the examples of Green companies with Green initiatives in Malaysia:

- i. DiGi
DiGi has launched "Deep Green" as part of its CSR to protect the earth. Their strategy involves swapping old equipment with newer, more energy-efficient ones and reducing air-conditioning in the radio base stations, among others. It is also involved in the Mangrove-saving Project, where the goal is to stop the destruction of mangrove forests in Kuala Selangor.
- ii. Sime Darby
Sime Darby realizes the importance of trees in the environment. Therefore, despite inevitable deforestation for housing and development, they are aware of the implications and have chosen

to offset that with the Plant a Tree Program. They pledged to plant one tree for every cut out of its advertisement found on Page T5, StarTwo of The Star newspaper dated 3 March 2009 received from the public. Sime Darby also invests time and money to nurture seedlings of rare and endangered species at their gene bank in Carey Island.

- iii. Shell Malaysia
This oil and gas company has a program called the Shell Sustainable Development (SD) Grants Programme, which gives out RM300,000 to fund sustainable projects in the community. This grant has benefited eight organizations in their various environmental-preservation efforts such as mangrove replanting and coastal conservation, environmental education activities for pre-schoolers, Stunggang Forest rehabilitation project, pygmy sea-horse conservation, dugong conservation, among others.
- iv. Panasonic Malaysia
Panasonic has come up with a range of green products which is energy-efficient. They are now promoting the inverter technology, which adjusts the power output of various electronic devices and reduces the total consumption of energy by as much as 20% in refrigerators and as much as 50% in air conditioners. It also uses almost no lead in its products, thus when the parts are recycled, very little lead is released to the environment. Panasonic is also striving to conserve natural resources through efficient usage of electricity, water and paper. Panasonic also sends a team once a year to the coast of Terengganu to clean the ocean and build artificial reefs to encourage the growth of coral.
- v. Aeon Co (M) Bhd
Aeon Co., which owns the JUSCO chain of supermarkets, is making a conscious effort to go green. As part of its green agenda, Aeon has launched a campaign to encourage JUSCO customers to say no to plastic bags and instead use reusable shopping bags. They have set an example by reducing the usage of plastic bags in their supermarkets and general merchandise sections. Jusco also started using business cards made from recycled paper. They also sell exclusive biodegradable garbage bag at a lower price than the conventional garbage bag.
- vi. Malaysia Airlines (MAS)
Everyone knows that flying is not good for the environment. MAS has however taken steps to help diminish this problem. It has strived to reduce fuel consumption by flying more direct routes at the most economical speed, practicing continuous descent approaches and flying lighter and cleaner aircrafts to improve fuel efficiency. They have also introduced the carbon-offsetting scheme. Passengers on MAS may choose to make a contribution which will help fund selected United Nations-sanctioned programmes to protect rainforests in Malaysia.
- vii. Canon Malaysia
In 2008, Canon Malaysia launched the Canon Goes Green Campaign. Under this campaign, the company planted a tree for every photo submitted to it by the public. Canon pledged to plant 2,500 trees to enrich the green lung at Padang Kota Damansara. Previously, Canon has also given out discount vouchers to consumers who recycle used toners and ink cartridges by disposing of them in Canon Recycle Bins dispersed across the Klang Valley.

The Malaysian government has invested to protection of the environment. However, the knowledge on consumers' attitude towards the green products is not high. With thousands of products on the shelves, it's rather difficult to pick out those that won't harm the environment. This is especially true when so many products these days are manufactured with the health of the environment in mind. Findings of the previous studies disclosed that Malaysian consumers prefer to purchase products and services from reputable companies and becoming more selective during purchase activities in terms of types of green product performance and cost (Chen & Chai, 2010; Hasan & Ali, 2015).

However, Mohd Rafi et al. (2003) research study found out the educated consumers in the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia, possesses not or slightly awareness of green products. Moreover, the research study by Alwitt & Berger's (1993) also found that 70% of consumers did not purchase for the green products or services although they has shown their concern for the environment.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTE CONSUMERS TO BUY GREEN PRODUCT

Based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the intention of performing the specific behaviour (in this study purchasing green product) is influenced by three main components of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control. The attitude of consumers towards the environment or healthy life style could affect their intention to purchase green products (Hossein and Masoumeh 2015). For instance, in a study on green purchasing in Malaysia (Rezai et al., 2011) it was observed that the socio demographic variables of educational level, income level, age and marital status significantly affect the consumer's intention towards green purchasing.

Experience and knowledge about green products can be reason for the consumers to purchase green products (Chen, 2010). Study done by Chang and Fong (2010) made a survey of the consumers who had experienced purchasing green or environmental products in Taiwan and found that green product quality and green corporate image could bring green customer satisfaction and green customer loyalty. Hence, Rao et al. (2011) suggests that if business offer environmental friendly products to consumers with affordable prices and high quality as compared to traditional products, along these consumers have positive intentions to purchase green products, green product purchase will be high. Moreover, Chase and Smith (1992) also revealed that 70% of the consumer purchase decisions were influenced by environmental protection message given in advertising and product labelling.

Green awareness has become one of the reasons for consumers to show their responsibility to protect the environment prior to purchasing activities (Cherian & Jacob, 2012). They appreciate products which are less harmful to human, animal, environment and most importantly, recyclable (Borin et al., 2013). Yaacob and Zakaria (2011) conferred that in general, consumers engage in green products for the benefits of environmental improvement they live in, to some extent consumers with green awareness in mind also willing to pay extra because they understand the environmental benefits that can be gained from the product. In fact, consumer's environmental awareness, passionate and perception towards deteriorating quality of environment have made them to behave environmentally friendly, which in turn, change their purchasing activities towards green products (Mohd Nazri et al., 2016). In some cases, direct personal benefits, such as perceived health advantages of organic foods or the energy saving of an eco-friendly air conditioner, are mostly observed. Chen and Chang (2012) inspected the roles of green perceived value, green perceived risk, and the mediating effect of green trust on the green purchase intention of information and technology products in Taiwan.

The psychology studies on green purchase behaviour including (Robinson et al., 2002; Han et al., 2009) indicate that the socio-demographic characteristics of age, gender, income, marital status, income level, and educational level are influential factors on green products purchasing. For instance, in a study on green purchasing in Malaysia (Rezai et al., 2011) it was observed that the socio demographic variables of educational level, income level, age and marital status significantly affect the respondents' intention towards green purchasing. Furthermore, in terms of gender, the majority of studies such as Olivová (2011) find that female carry higher intention to perform green behaviour. In addition, the literature on green products purchasing conclude that factors of animal welfare, human health and protecting the environment affect the behavioural intention of purchasing environmentally friendly product (Williams and Hammit, 2001).

Makower (2009) found that, green consumers are sometimes thought to be younger, better educated and more upscale than their non-green counterparts. The study also shows that the greenest consumers are represent by the youth group which aged 17-25 year olds. According to Straughan and Roberts (1999), younger individual were likely to be more sensitive to environmental

issues. The result of the study indicated that the demographic variables such as age and sex were significantly correlated with customers' attitude toward green purchase when considered individually; and that income lacks significance. However, Soonthonsmai (2001) stated that green purchase intention correlates positively with every age and income except for education. In fact, many studies have shown significant differences between men and women in environmental attitudes (Brown and Harris, 1992; Tikka et al., 2001) with men having more negative attitudes towards the purchase green products compared to women (Eagly, 1987; Tikka et al., 2000). Women were more likely to buy green product because they believe the product was better for the environment (Mainieri et al., 1997).

In many developed countries, majority of the consumers perceive that it is compulsory to adopt green lifestyle as modern way of life (Young et al., 2010). As a consequence, if they refuse to take it as a challenge they will be viewed as not up-to-date by the society. As regards psychographic profile, in terms of personality and lifestyle aspects, regular green purchasers are generally driven by societal and individualistic values, such as: Universalism (the appreciation and safeguard of all people and of nature); Altruism (the generosity in relationships with others); Ecology (the harmony with the nature and with a sustainable future); Benevolence (the enhancement of the welfare of the people with whom one is in touch); and Spirituality (the unity with the natural world) (Dreezens et al. 2005; Krystallis et al. 2006; Zanolli and Naspetti 2002).

It is known that the product price and quality are criteria used by consumers in deciding whether to purchase a green product (Bei and Simpson, 1995). However, it is increasingly becoming the case that people are more prepared to pay extra for products that are not destructive to the environment (Chen and Chang, 2012). For instance, over 80% consumers in Thailand, Malaysia, and Korea are prepared to pay premium prices to use environmentally-friendly products (Lung, 2010), and in the UK, 79% of female respondents to a survey show their enthusiasm to pay up to 40% more for a product with proven green credentials (Laroche et al., 2001).

In addition, another influencer which able to bring huge impact on purchases intention is social media. A survey has been conducted by Ad-logy Research (Business Wire, 2009) which to study online, traditional and social media influence on buying decisions. The survey has found that social media and online media have significant impact on their purchase intention. For instance social networking; google, facebook, twitter, flickr, youtube, etc. can influence the purchase intention of people to purchase for green products

Baker and Ozaki (2008) research studies shows social norms (social influence) are important in driving ecologically responsible behavior. According to their study, Baker and Ozaki declare that social norm has a powerful link to environmental friendly behavior which it able to drive the people buying the green products. Also Lee (2008) found out that peer influence was the most important factor for Hong Kong's adolescents' green purchasing behavior compare to other factors. Not only that, the Kalafatis et al. (1999) research studies further concluded that social norm has a direct and significant effect on intention. Follow the research studies by (ElhamRahbar & Nabsiah, 2011), the social influence is found to be the highest predictor of green purchase behavior of Penang green volunteers in the terms of ranking based on the study.

Furthermore, consumer's purchase decision is commonly influenced by the opinion of people around them (i.e. family, members, friends and community) (Mohd Noor et al., 2013). In earlier research by Straughan and Roberts (1999), it was found that peer opinion plays a role in influencing consumer decisions to go green. Decisions of an environmentally-friendly nature, such as to recycle and to participate in activities aimed to protect the environment, are encouraged in situations where peers do this (Kahle, 1996).

In terms of parental influence toward people especially young consumer to purchase for green products has imposed some significant impact. Parental influence is seen as a socialization factor in adolescent stage. The study on (Chaplin & John, 2010) shows the consumption behavior of a parent, their attitudes and their intentions to buy product strongly influence the consumption

pattern of young adolescent people, meaning that children always benchmark on the purchase behavior of their parents and tend to purchase the specific product same as their parents do. Palmer (1999) study found that family influence can inspire young people in shaping their behavior toward environmental awareness. Besides, peer influence also shaped a purchase intention of customer towards green products. Based on the research studies of (Ryan, 2001), people may become affected with their peers beliefs and behaviors in their development stage, especially in young adolescent stages. A study has been conducted in China based study among children information seeking sources shows, they value friends ranked as third most important influential factor (McNeal & Ji, 1999) among other socializing factors. Thus, people especially for young customer always get influence to purchase specific products. For instance, young customer may choose to purchase for green when their friends has purchase for green also.

Environmentally friendly, or green products, have become very popular and it is estimated that consumers will spend \$500 billion on green products in the year 2008 alone (Weeks 2008). Thus, many manufacturers in various industries have adopted eco-friendly practices that affect not only the production process but also the resulting product (Kivimaa and Kautto 2010). Hence, green companies significantly affect the consumer's to purchase green product. Green companies with high reputation believe in sustainable marketing and consistently protect the environment for the benefit of next generation. For years, consumers demand companies to produce environmentally friendly products with minimum impact to the environment (Hasan & Ali, 2015). In countries where the consumerism is high, consumers will carefully look at the accreditation to understand the product's impact to the environment. There is a tendency where they refuse to purchase products from irresponsible companies. In the worst case scenario, consumers even show their protest against companies who manipulate the green marketing campaign such as greenwashing or deceptive environmental claims (Vermillion & Peart, 2010). Thus, nowadays, many companies engage in research and development (R&D) to minimize the carbon footprint and also to comply with the international standard and regulation (Ko et al., 2013) in order to attract customers to buy of their products.

Besides that, it will be difficult to convince one to make his life harder by forking out more money to save the world when those that are doing more damage aren't paying the price. Certainly, the consumers have no solid reasons to choose a green product over an environmentally damaging alternative. After all, it's only reasonable and natural that one should be able to take care of himself before he can consider the health of the planet Earth. Previous studies have suggested that the relationship between "green" attitudes and environmentally oriented behavior is rather weak (Martin & Simintiras, 1995). Though consumers express their concern towards the environment; this does not necessarily translate into green purchases. Consumers continued to embrace sustainable alternatives to traditional consumption. There seems having a gap between consumers' attitude and their behavior toward green products. The cosmetic brands and manufactures face a challenging task to develop segmentation and targeting strategies (Souza et al., 2007). As a result, it is critical to examine the factors that influence consumers' product evaluation and purchasing decision process (Baker & Ozaki, 2008). In general, consumers tend to purchase their favorable and familiar brand (Chi et al., 2009). The power and value of a brand depends on the brand knowledge that being formed and perceived in consumers' mind.

As example, Ali et al. (2011) evaluated the green purchase attitude and green purchase intention of Pakistan consumers and found that there are many customers who have positive and high intention to purchase green products but due to high prices and poorer qualities as compared to non-green products then do not buy them. Research has shown that consumers do not always understand environmentally friendly labels attached to products (Kangun and Polonsky 1995). Eco-labels such as 'Biodegradable', 'Sustainable', 'Environmental friendly', and 'Recyclable' are usually unfamiliar or unknown to consumers. Yet, there is much uncertainty among companies and firms on the product dimensions to be considered when developing green products.

CONCLUSION

Individuals around the world have expressed their commitment to living more eco-friendly lifestyles. Supporting the green product movement will help ensure this way of living continues to be possible and it starts with purchasing truly green products. Consumer environmental concern is seen to increase when consumption behaviour becomes more geared towards environmentally-sensitive goods and services, and consumers change their purchasing behaviour to become greener (Kilbourne and Pickett, 2008). Although the number of individuals willing to purchase green products has increased in the last few years, there is little evidence to suggest that purchase of green products has increased; despite environmental concern and positive attitude of customers towards sustainability and green products, market share of green products remains confined to just 1-3% of the entire market (Bray et al., 2011). This suggests that environmental considerations play a minor role in consumer purchasing decisions and people generally overlook environmental impacts of their purchases (Mohr et al., 2001). As example, Defra (2006) found that 30% of the consumers in UK have reported their concern towards the environment, but rarely translated their concern into a green purchase. It is thus clear that there exists a gap between consumers' thinking and actual actions (Chen & Chai, 2010).

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