

Marketing to Tweenagers' :Delving into their Choice of Media and its Influence on their Purchase Intention

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Abstract

Children have emerged as a segment that has grabbed the marketers' attention. As a consequence of generational differences, a special age group –Tweenagers, have evolved in the recent years, has become an important section to be tapped by the marketers. Tweenagers are children between 8-12 years old. With 30% population in the age group of 0- 14, India has a large cohort of Tweenagers. This segment has been gaining popularity, since, it is considered to be a lucrative market. It becomes pertinent to study the type of media, persuading the Tweenagers' in their decision making, and further, having an impact on their purchase intention. The framework has been structured where the documented literature has been outlined in a tabular form, consequently, the hypotheses have been developed, focusing on the research gaps, followed by analysis and wrapping the paper by suggesting practical implications for the marketers.

Keywords - Tweenagers, Purchase intention, Types of media

Introduction

Focus on children as a consumer, has augmented mutually from the social and the business perspective. The power of the child consumer has been celebrated in the market space (Kaur and Singh, 2006). This segment has been receptive and responsive to all sorts of marketing communication, which has primarily been the purpose, why marketers want to cater to this highly profitable slice of the marketplace (Sharma and Dasgupta, 2009). From a mere spectator, the child grows up to become an influencer and a buyer too. Tweenagers, a special sub segment has evolved in the recent years, and has captured the marketers' interest (Chui et al., 2013).

Tweenagers' can be delineated as "8-12 year olds" (Andersen et al., 2007, p. 340-350). They are not only a primary market, but also considered to be an influential and a potential marketplace (McNeal, 1999). Further, Tseng and Lee (2013, p. 259-277) opine that "twens purchase behavior occupies a position in the current consumer market that cannot be ignored". Tweenagers are a prominent consumer lot with a great deal of serious business at stake in the Tweenage market (Schor, 2004). Therefore, it becomes worth deliberating, as this segment is a profitable one.

KGOY, "Kids Grow Old Younger" has been the driving force behind most of the marketing activity that is directed towards the Tweenagers (Kurnit, 2004, p. 19-24). The Tweenage is a budding stage,

where the children are considered to be grown up and start behaving like young adults. They are believed to encompass the attributes partially of children and teenagers. Gradually, Tweens initiate to develop their persona and thus seek information from parents, media and peers that facilitate them in identifying themselves. Consequently, they begin to recognize their own interests and express their needs and requirements more persuasively (Adler et al., 1980). Apart from influencing purchase decisions, they play crucial role through the decision making process. Identifying requirements for home, family members and themselves, they drive the information search about products, prices and deals. With emergent markets, marketers are becoming aware and are directly targeting Tweenagers. They are not only a consumer force to be reckoned at present, but the potential consumers for the years to come.

Tweens and media

The pervasiveness of media has compelled the marketers to investigate this unfurled segment to gauge the role, media plays in their life. The optimism on the potential benefits of social media for learning, developing and sharing content has spurred everyone's attention. Media has been one of the most powerful carriers of information. Newspapers, magazines, television, radio and internet crafts our beliefs and perceptions. Television is an accessible media for children of all age groups (Kaur and Singh, 2006). In addition, Winick and Winick (1979) refer to television, as a member of the family, suggesting the importance and role of television in their development. Busy dads and moms have made children dependent on media for their learning (Soni and Upadhyay, 2007) owing to the paucity of time. As a consequence, children find media more credible than parents. Therefore, this offers marketers with the opportunity to apprise children, of the products and its awareness through media (Calvert, 2008).

The new media has more attractions than the traditional format. Social media have proved to be a meritorious communication tool for the younger lot, it gives a chance of augmented expression of private exchange, conversations, and pictures with the possibility of allowing others to notice and comment at the same time (Boyd, 2007). An in-depth study conducted by Lenhardt (2011) on the usage of social networking sites and the tone of online communication captures the complexities (Boyd, 2009; Turkle, 2011; Ito, 2010) and how social media use can cause anxiety (Turkle, 2011) have further highlighted the relevance of the social impact of new media.

Tweenagers' world over have different choices and influences. Andersen et al., (2007) found that Danish "tweens" use internet and social media for entertainment and communication with their peers; on the other hand, their counterparts in Hong Kong use the available media for more academic activities like homework. Singaporean Tweens

are found to be influenced by peers and media celebrities, advertisements and marketing promotions (La Ferle and Chan, 2006). Whereas, Taiwanese adolescents are highly influenced by celebrities having an impact on their purchase intention (Chiou et al., 2005). Compulsive buying patterns were also shown in 46% of EU adolescents (Garces, 2002). Many studies have been conducted in America (Goldberg et al., 2003), Malaysia (Chui et al., 2013) pertaining to the Tweenagers.

Rationale for the study and Research questions

Euromonitor International (2011) record that India has the world's largest cohort of Tweenagers. According to Webster (1994), India offers an interesting and diverse culture vastly different from the West in various social variables, thus, meriting further research. Apart from the peer and the parents, "no other agent of consumer socialization has received more attention, than mass media" (Moschis, 1987, p.121). Despite the shift in the changing technology and the penetration of virtual networks, television format still remains popular area of research. Therefore, it becomes significant to study the influence of social networks, social platforms, smart phones and internet on the Tweenagers. Academic research on the impact of digital technologies on the Indian families and children is conspicuously lacking. There is hardly any documented literature investigating the role of media, specifically in context of the Tweenagers, with respect to television, online gaming sites, social networking sites, and online shopping sites, in the Indian setting.

With an objective of comprehensively sifting through the nuances and adeptly targeting the prospective Indian Tweenager segment, it becomes relevant to examine the unexplored arena. The paper attempts to investigate as to which media type influences the purchase intention of the Indian Tweenagers. The research will offer response to the following questions:

- Does all type of media have an impact on the purchase intention of Indian Tweenagers
- Which media type has more influence on the purchase intention of Indian Tweenagers

The paper has been structured with the introduction in the onset, followed by the rationale for the study and the research questions to be investigated, further, discussing the conceptual framework, pursued by the research methodology, discussion and concluding with marketing implications.

Literature review

Extant literature has been reviewed to include the most significant dimensions for the study. These key constructs have been described in detail for distinct understanding of the empirical analysis.

Table 1: Prior studies related to the dimensions influencing the Tweenagers

S NO.	AUTHORS	PURPOSE	METHODOLOGY	OUTCOMES
1	Chui <i>et al.</i> , (2013)	Inspect the consumer socialization agents for Tweens influencing the purchase of branded apparels	Structured questionnaire was used to obtain responses for 150 urban Tweens between the ages of 8 to 12 years	Advertisement influences along with the interest in media, significantly impact their purchase of branded apparels
2	Brito (2012)	Explored the extent to which children have an awareness of digital technologies	Thirteen-focus group research design along with the quantitative approach involving 103 Tweens	SMS assumed a rather utilitarian role, emails more for practical purposes and Internet as a tool offering plethora of activities
3	Ali <i>et al.</i> , (2012)	Studied consumer socialization of children with respect to their influence in terms of family decision making	Appraised the literature of two decades on consumer socialization of children	Mass media impact on the knowledge, skills and attitudes of children and further influence on their brand choice and consumption behavior
4	Lwinet <i>al.</i> , (2012)	Identified the motivation for young consumers in terms of their online behavior	Surveyed 85 students of an elementary school covering students from the age of 6 to 12 with children in the range of 10 to 12 years as the majority.	Information seeking motivations were positively related to privacy concerns while socializing motivations were negatively related to privacy concerns.
5	Anderson <i>et al.</i> , (2008)	Studied the Tweens market of Denmark and Hong kong in terms of their response to television commercials and advertisements on the internet	Survey of 434 students from fourth, fifth and sixth grade in schools from Denmark and Hong Kong	Danish Tweens were more likely to spend money on CDs, computer games, clothes, sports equipment and cosmetics/ jewelry than Hong Kong Tweens after being exposed to commercials and internet
6	Martensen (2007)	Highlighted the Tweens satisfaction with and the loyalty to mobile phones	Tweens in the age group of 8-12 from 35 schools in the area of Greater Copenhagen were surveyed in their classrooms with a questionnaire consisting 46 questions along with some qualitative interviews	Tweens were found to be satisfied as compared to the adults however, the brands were unable to develop brand loyalty among Tweens
7	Anderson <i>et al.</i> , (2007)	Studied the comparison between ownership and usage of new media among Tweens consumers in Denmark and Hong Kong	Survey consisting of 434 respondents of fourth, fifth and sixth grader was conducted in six elementary schools in Denmark and Hong Kong	Ownership of new media, ownership of mobile phone and heavy use of the internet were found to be more prevalent among Danish Tweens in comparison to Hong Kong Tweens
8	Leuget <i>al.</i> , (2006)	Studied the factors that influence consumer's propensity to utilize alternative shopping channels for shopping and purchasing	Data was collected from high school students across both mall and internet shopping channels	Involvement with a channel has major influence on time and money spent
9	Azzarone, S. (2003)	Examined relationships between technology, use, age gender and self esteem	Telephonic survey conducted in July 2003 and comprised a random sample of 500 households with children in the age group 8-12 (Tweens) and 13-17 (teens)	Positive relationship between use of technology and self-esteem. The key reasons for usage of these technologies were: ability to master new skills, explore their potential, feel proud about their potential and feeling happy about making friends

Theory development and hypothesis

Media is one of the socialization agents that affect the children throughout their development (Moschis and Churchill, 1978). Past research discusses the impact of media exposure on the cognitive, affective and behavioral pattern in children. Studies focus on the extent to which media can persuade children to stimulate purchase requests (Galstand White, 1976).

The Tweenage segment is active in purchase decision making. They influence purchases for themselves, for parents and for family. Many a times they communicate their intention to purchase to parents and family members since they do not have enough money. Hence, purchase intention is a more appropriate construct to study. Children have an access to both television and internet. The exposure is not only through advertisements on television but also through the new media.

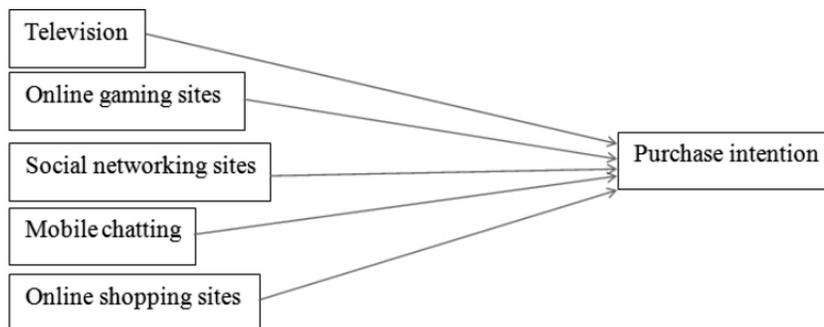


Figure 1: Model Depicting Media Influence on Purchase Intention

Purchase Intention

Schiffman and Kanuk (2009) suggest Purchase Intention as the possibility measurement of consumers purchasing certain products. They claim that higher the Purchase Intention, larger the purchase probability. Higher purchase intention assures a higher consumer's willingness to buy a product (Doddset al., 1991). Blackwellet al., (2001) propose that, the consumers' conceptual thoughts and perception, represents their purchase intention. A consumers' behavior towards an object, symbolize their intention to purchase (Kim and Kim, 2004). The intention to purchase is the final cognitive step in the decision making process agreed upon by most previous researchers (Agarwal and Teas, 2002; Erevelles, 1993; Fishbein M., 1967; Han, 1990; Pecotichet al., 1996).

Media

Considerable work has divulged that as interaction materializes with mass media, consumer behavior learning and consumer socialization occurs (Moschis and Churchill, 1978; Moschis and Moore, 1982; O'Guinn and Shrum, 1997). The scholarly research focuses mainly on influence of advertising and impact of editorial/programming content on children, encouraging purchase (Ward and Wackman, 1973; Clncy-Hepburn, et al., 1974; Galstand White, 1976; Gornand Goldberg, 1982; O'Guinn and Shrum, 1997).

Traditional media like television has certain key advantages. Firstly, its influence on consumers' choice and perception is pervasive. Secondly, it has a cost-effective reach. Television's audio-visual appeal creates a strong impact

(Ramalingam, 2006). Television leads to an interest in favor of purchasing, desire intended for purchasing, action towards purchasing and consumers satisfaction towards the purchased product (Ansari and Joloudar, 2011).

However, consumers are increasingly using social media sites to search for information and moving away from traditional media, such as television, radio, and magazines (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

Roberts et al., (1999) report that children access websites. Online media can be understood as a variety of digital sources of information that are created, initiated, circulated, and consumed by the internet users to educate about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues (Chauhan and Pillai, 2013). The information gathered helps to initiate, speculate and decide upon purchase choices. Marketers are aware of the imminent need to focus on developing personal two-way relationships with consumers to foster interactions (Li and Bernoff, 2011). Hence, it has been hypothesised that:

H1: Television influences the purchase intention of Indian Tweenagers

H2: Online gaming sites influence the purchase intention of Indian Tweenagers

H3: Social networking sites influence the purchase intention of Indian Tweenagers

H4: Online shopping sites influence the purchase intention of Indian Tweenagers

Research methodology

Measure

Data has been collected through a survey conducted in Delhi NCR, India. The target population for the study were children aged 8-12 years. The students of this age group could complete the survey adequately. A list of Schools from was obtained from the Annual rankings of the Times Group. The top 10 and the top contender schools from each zone of the Delhi NCR were contacted through e-mails and their participation was invited for the survey. The schools which expressed willingness to participate were presented the research details to the school authorities. After obtaining the permission from the school authorities, the questionnaire was distributed to the students during the class timings and was self-administered by the students using a paper and pencil format. A draft questionnaire was prepared by referring the validated scales. The questionnaire was pre-tested for clarity and accuracy by personally interviewing 10 children, initially. In total, 750 questionnaires were distributed, of which, 654 were retained which were complete, were used for the analysis.

The questionnaire consisted of statements pertaining to the television influence, online gaming sites influence, social networking sites influence and online shopping sites influence and purchase intention. Prior to the study, a discussion with tweenagers was done on several aspects of their life; media being one of them. Children of this age-group outrightly reject magazines and newspapers as a part of their media habits. Hence, only television has been taken as a construct. All the questions were measured on the continuum ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). In constructing the items for the questionnaire, validated scales from the previous studies were referred. Established scales have been used to measure the constructs and wording was modified to appropriately fit the context of the study and understanding of the respondents. Constructs for which appropriate scales could not be identified have

been obtained through factor analysis. These include social networking sites and online shopping websites influence. KMO and Bartlett’s test were conducted to check the suitability of data for structure detection. A .907 value of KMO measure, which is much greater than 0.60 and significant Bartlett’s test of sphericity suggest that the data is suitable for structuredetection. Five components emerged from the principal component analysis. The component matrix and rotated component matrix with Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation method, both gave five components with all Eigen values of above 1. These variables accounted for 56.99% of the variability. The statements were grouped under different factors. Further correlation was used for common dimension identification. Television influence and online gaming sites was measured by asking respondents to rate statements on the scale of Dotson and Hyatt (2005) and Kaur and Medury (2011) respectively. Television influence scale included statements like “Watching TV is important for me” and “I always watch TV after school”. For online gaming sites influence the statements used were “I talk about products I have seen on internet while playing games” and “I ask my parents to see the information on internet with me for products we are about to purchase”. Purchase Intention of the respondents was measured by statements like “I intend to try the products about which others tell me or which I see on TV/ internet” and “I want to see how those products about which others tell me or which I see on TV/ internet or will look on me” adapted from the Bower (2001), Bower & Landreth (2001).

Assessment of Reliability and Validity

To test the scale consistency, measuring the scale items Cronbach alpha (a) was used. Cronbach alpha, greater than 0.6 is regarded as acceptable (Hair et al. 2006). As depicted in Table2 , the Cronbach alpha was more than 0.60 for each constructs, which suggests that all dimensions are internally consistent.

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Coefficient Alpha (a)</i>	<i>No. of Items</i>
Television	.789	4
Online gaming sites	.831	7
Social networkingsites	.806	6
Online shopping sites	.806	4
Purchase Intention	.842	6

Content validity has been established by identifying the items from the literature and thorough reviewing by academicians and experts.

Results

The respondents profile included 335 boys and 319 girls which is 51.2% and 48.8% respectively of the total sample.

The younger tweens (8-10 years) were 349 and older tweens (11-12 years) were 305 in number promising a balanced participation. 252 respondents were from nuclear family and

402 from joint family which is 38.5% and 61.5% respectively.

Findings regarding respondents' perception of variables under study have been summarized in Table 3

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Television	3.51	.900
Online gaming sites	3.15	.964
Social networkingsites	2.80	1.00
Online shopping sites	3.37	1.10
Purchase Intention	3.03	.909

The mean score of television influence was 3.51 with standard deviation of .90. Respondents were in agreement with the influence of television on them. The respondents did agree that “watching TV is fun” and they “watch TV after school”. The mean score of online shopping sites influence was 3.37 with a standard deviation of 1.1 with their belief in “online shopping sites have many product options” and that “online shopping is in trend”. The mean value of online gaming influence is 3.15 with majority of them agreeing on “seeing new products while playing games over the internet” and “asking parents to see the information on gaming sites for products we are about to purchase”. Respondents agreed that social networking sites influence them, the mean value being 2.80 with standard deviation of 1.00.

The television influence score was higher than the gaming sites influence score but close to the online shopping site influence score. However, the responses were divided on the statement asking them if they enjoy online gaming more than television.

The mean score of purchase intention construct was 3.03. Respondents agreed that they are excited to see those products about which others tell them or which they see on television/ internet. They also intended to try those products about which others told them or which they saw on television/ internet. They expressed an agreement on desire to see how those products about which others tell them or they see on television/ internet will look on them.

In order to understand relationships between key variables, Pearson correlations were undertaken as can be seen in Table 4.

		Television	Online gaming site	Social networking site	Onlineshopping site	Purchase intention
Television	Pearson Correlation	1	.216**	.256**	.246**	.275**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	654	654	654	654	654
Online gaming site	Pearson Correlation	.216**	1	.556**	.479**	.450**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	654	654	654	654	654
Social networking site	Pearson Correlation	.256**	.556**	1	.463**	.508**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	654	654	654	654	654
Online shopping site	Pearson Correlation	.246**	.479**	.463**	1	.475**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	654	654	654	654	654
Purchase intention	Pearson Correlation	.275**	.450**	.508**	.475**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	654	654	654	654	654

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation between media type and purchase intention has been calculated. It was found that all these variables have a positive and significant relationship with Purchase intention but the strength of the relationship varied significantly.

It can be seen that purchase intention has a significant ($p < .05$) and positive relationship with television ($r = .275$). Hence, H1 Television media has a significant and positive relationship with purchase intention is supported.

For evaluating H2, H3, H4, purchase intention has been correlated with variables. The correlation between purchase intention and online gaming sites is significant ($r=.450$), accepting hypothesis H2. The correlation between purchase intention and social networking website ($r=.508$) is significant supporting H3. Pearson moment correlation between purchase intention and online shopping website influence ($r=.475$) has a significant p value ($p<.05$). The hypothesis, H4 is accepted.

It can also be seen that the highest value of correlation is between purchase intention and social networking sites ($r=.508$) which is an important output of the study.

Apart from this when the coefficient values of traditional media influence and new media influence correlation with purchase intention are compared, it is found that the new media influence is much higher than the traditional media. This is contrary to the long held belief that television is the sole medium which appeals to and influences the children.

Discussion and conclusion

The present study is first of its kind that examines the type of media having an impact on the purchase intention among the Tweenagers. The outcome of the study reveals that the Tweenagers in India are influenced by the traditional form of media i.e. television even in the present times. The results are in tandem with the studies conducted focusing on the impact of the television and its effectiveness in the Western countries (Derbaix and Claude, 2003; Rossiter, 1977). Television undeniably, is the most influential medium owing to its reach. In a country like India, where internet has not penetrated even in some wealthier homes, it is worth noting that television is still the popular media. Tweenagers watch television everyday and have expressed in the responses that they find television watching amusing and also a medium of learning.

Alternatively, new media is picking up fast especially among the Tweenager audience. The use of social media is more impactful on the younger generation (Nancy et al, 2009, Tiffany et al, 2009). Subsequently, the Indian Tweenagers are also catching up fast with the changing times. Internet influence among Tweenagers is reported high in the study. The study unfurled that majority of Tweenagers browse through internet everyday with more internet exposure on holidays. They are equally impressed by the social media and the paraphernalia around it. In addition, the Indian Tweenagers are influenced by the charm of social networks. Despite their age group they all are active on Facebook either through their own account or through their parents/ friends accounts.

The aggressive marketing promotions done by the online shopping brands have not only made the Tweenagers aware but also enamoured by the array of offers and discounts. The

omnipresent campaigns of brands like Flipkart, Amazon, Snapdeal and Myntra have made them household names. Children know much about these portals and have themselves browsed through one or more online seller's website. They have also advised their parents on the purchases for family and for themselves. Among the new media, online shopping site influence has the highest mean.

Phelps and Hoy (1996) found that third and sixth-graders' attitude toward television and its advertising impacted their purchase intention. There exists a similar scenario in the Indian setting, wherein there is a positive correlation between television influence and purchase intention. However, when television and new media are compared for their impact on purchase intention, the results are reversed. The otherwise popular, television loses out to the new media. The correlation coefficient value of all new media variables with purchase intention is more than the television influence. This is a clear indication that new media is driving in more admirers in the said segment. This can completely change the landscape of the child consumer learning. As children spend more amount of time online (Rideout et al., 2010; Livingstone et al., 2011), advertising and other aspects of the commercial world have become an inevitable part of their media environment. Also, social networking sites (SNS) create great opportunities for the children and young people to maintain friendships and develop relationships (Clarke, 2009). The approach of Tweenagers towards their purchase decision making is twisted in favour of modern media, primarily due to the choice, options and autonomy of finding as per their preferences. On the other hand, the control on information to be shared is with the media owner.

To conclude, the current study supported a perspective of delineating the media choice of Tweenagers in the Indian setting, with respect to their purchase intention. Although, a relatively small segment in number, some interesting findings have surfaced. It is intriguing to find that television is the most influential media even today; nevertheless for stimulating the purchase intention of Tweenager, the new media is emerging as a robust media.

Managerial Implications

Marketers and researchers' interest in the Tweenager segment can be attributed to the promise that it beholds of being a rewarding segment. Tweenagers have needs distinct from the younger kids and teenagers just as their western counterparts. Gratifying the formidable consumer group today can help cultivating loyalty as they grow.

Academic research has mainly focused on the levels of advertising on popular children's TV channels, effect of commercial messages on children and other negative effects

of media. However, marketers of today need to comprehend the present generation, pertaining to their preferences, tastes, likes and dislikes. Even in the contemporary times, the most preferred medium for the marketers is to promote through television, especially, the cartoon and entertainment channels. It is quite interesting to know that though they do spend much time watching television, however, it is not having a significant impact on their purchase intention. The Marketers need to make use of the new media by promoting through websites, banner ads, links, videos and logos.

Avenues for research are open in the direction of social networking sites, mobile and location based marketing and product placement, since these are predicted to become increasingly significant. Meanwhile, media both traditional and new can impact the decision making capacity and direction. Exposure to media ensures that children are not only more aware but also more astute in their buying and influencing decisions. An analysis of media habits, engagement with media and returns on investment can be probable initiatives.

Tweenagers are an emanating consumer segment that hold potential for the future market. Comprehending the Tweenager from the above mentioned perspectives will help the marketers devising the marketing and communication strategies. Discerning the factors impacting their preferences and intentions to purchase, will pave a new arena for the marketers and the scholars of marketing.

Limitation

The data collected in the study relied on self-reporting. Sometimes the children might give socially desirable responses. The data was collected as per the instructions of the school authorities. The respondents might vary in their responses depending which time of the day they complete their questionnaire (in the morning or in the afternoon classes). Further, the research was conducted in the private/public schools from Delhi, NCR, the respondents of government schools might have differing opinion. Also, parental mediation can be an important factor in determining the influence of both old and new media.

Acknowledgement- I. K. Gujral Punjab Technical University, Jalandhar, Punjab

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