

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DIFFERENT FINISH MEDIA ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS TOWARD ADVERTISING AVOIDANCE AND USED TIME

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Abstract: *The purpose of this research is to study the relationship between media and attitudes towards informativeness, entertainment and credibility, and advertisement avoidance and used time (time spent per media). This study evaluated six media (TV, newspapers, magazines, radio, emails and social networks) in terms of attitudes and respondent behavior. A total of 402 respondents from Finland were approached with a self-administered questionnaire. The results of the hypothesis testing indicate that the attitudes of respondents differ depending on the media concerned. There are also differences between media and user behavior in terms of ad avoidance and used time. However, the relationships between the various media analyzed and ad avoidance appear to be media-specific as several of the media do not have a negative correlation between attitude and ad avoidance. Attitudes and used time on the other hand have a positive relationship with all the media except one, emails.*

Key words: *Advertisements, attitude, advertising avoidance, communication, credibility, entertainment, informativeness, media, social networks.*

1. Introduction

The world of advertising is changing as evidenced by the body of literature on the field. But, as Cappo (2003) observed, the change is sometimes too fast to be adequately recorded. One way of looking at the change and its consequences is by using Porter's (1985) model of competitive forces to analyze the sector. It helps, among others, to identify one of the two threats included in the model: - product substitution. As Meyer (2004) commented with regard to the threats to the newspaper industry, "*the newest of the disruptive technologies, online information services, may offer the most dangerous product substitution yet.*" Wu (2004) also found that the new online media are the most dangerous products substitute to date. Besides researchers talking about substitution, there are the media industry claims and spending statistics, all of which providing one-sided views, mostly to the benefit of social networks.

The media industry itself is filled with various claims of self-serving studies claiming superiority as a channel for marketing. This phenomenon can be observed from the following Finnish media websites. (<http://www.kestavamedia.fi/>, 2/11/2011) and (<http://www.aikakauslehdet.fi/Etusivu/>, 2/11/2011).

The fast-growing amounts marketers spend on online advertising would support these claims. EMarketer estimated that global revenues for social network ads would reach the \$5.54 billion mark by 2011. According to eMarketer, during the year 2011, 8.8% of online ad dollars in the U.S. and 6.9 percent worldwide went to social networking sites. It is estimated that by the year 2013, social network ad revenues will make up 11.7% of all online ad spending in the U.S. and 9.4 percent worldwide (www.emarketer.com, 07/10/2011).

One country that has witnessed such an increase is Finland, where web advertising spending rose by 28.5 percent from 2009 to 2010 while, at the same time, printed directories fell by 14.7 percent (Official Statistics of Finland, 09/04/2011). Finland will be the focus of this study.

Specifically, this study examines the attitudes of Finnish respondents toward various media (TV, newspapers, magazines, radio, emails and social networks). It investigates the substitution claims made by researchers (Wu 2004; Meyers 2004), the sensibility of growing advertising spending in the social networks, and the media industries self-claimed superiority over other media.

The claims will be investigated through the lens of Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) who stated that, attitude has a positive correlation with behavioral intentions, which is an antecedent of actual behavior. Theories of attitudes give this research its theoretical framework, because theories of attitudes, as analyzed by

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Trafimow and Finlay (1996), have determined that attitudes are the best predictors of behavioral intentions in twenty nine out of thirty studies.

2. Literature Review

- *Communication*

In Lasswell's (1948) theory of communication, the act of communication is divided in to three separate sections. The sequence starts with a sender, who conveys the message by using a medium to reach the target. Lasswell's (1948) classic model of effective communication assumes that the message will be most effectively delivered if the sender anticipates the needs and preferences of the receiver. This occurs, when encoding of the sender's message corresponds with the receiver's decoding of the message (Shannon and Weaver, 1949). The Shannon Weaver model, however, is mainly about message (Danaher and Rossiter, 2011). It was later realized that there was more to the act of communication. As implied by McLuhan's (1964) expression "the medium is the message," thus indicating the importance of the selected medium for the sake of delivering the message.

- *Media*

Media communication refers to channels through which news, entertainment, education, data, or promotional messages are disseminated. The media includes every broadcasting and narrowcasting medium such as newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, billboards telephone, fax, and internet (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/media>, 12/5/2011). Sissors and Baron (2002) stated that, the main task of the media is to deliver a message content to a large number of recipients. The content can be entertainment, information, or advertisements. Media should be thought of as a transporter and a system of delivery (Sissors and Baron, 2002). Advertisements are carried and brought to individuals by media (Sissors and Baron, 2002). Media users then decide which media they will use based on the kind and quality of the entertainment, information and advertisements the media provide.

- *Perception*

Perception is the interpretation of sensory information (Woolfolk, 2004). Consumer's perceptions of advertising have been linked with advertising effectiveness and the

strategies that companies follow (Anderson et al., 1978). The major elements of how to determine effective advertising include the perceptions that people hold of advertising as a source of product information and as a source of pleasure/hedonic use and as a social role. These factors can have an impact on general attitudes toward advertising itself, which in turn could have an impact on advertising effectiveness (Mehta, 2000).

- *Beliefs to Attitudes*

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), "A person's attitude is a function of his salient beliefs at a given point in time." Beliefs are subjective associations between any two concepts that can be separated. Salient beliefs are considered by a person in a given situation and they are activated from memory (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Pollay and Mittal (1993), indicated that attitudes are derived from beliefs. Attitudes are then a result of summing the weighted evaluations (judgments) of perceived attributes and consequences. Fishbein and Ajzen model is also compatible with the functional view of attitudes (Lutz, 1978). According to the functionalist theory of attitudes, people determine attitudes through the function they serve and people hold attitudes because those attitudes help them to gain their goals (Katz, 1960).

- *Attitude*

Attitude according to a majority of studies is the most significant factor influencing behavioral intention (e.g. ad avoidance and used time). A person's attitude is highly correlated with their intentions, which in turn is a good predictor of behavior (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). Marketing literature has thoroughly studied the links between attitude-behavioral intentions. Trafimow and Finlay (1996) found in their review of the literature that in twenty nine out of thirty studies, attitude was the best predictor of intention. Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) states that, attitude has a positive correlation with behavioral intentions, which is an antecedent of actual behavior (ad avoidance and using time).

- *Informativeness*

Informativeness refers to the ability to effectively provide relevant information (Oh and Xu, 2003). McQuail (1983) determined that the information gratification sought after and attained from the media includes the following items: (i) "finding out about relevant

events, and conditions in immediate surroundings, society, and the world;” (ii) “seeking advice on practical matters or opinions and decision choices;” (iii) “satisfying curiosity and general interest;” (iv) “learning, self education;” and (v) “gaining a sense of security through knowledge”.

Mass media informs the audience of various topics and the information presented is difficult to separate from persuasion (DeVito, 1998). Consumers want to have messages that are relevant for them (Milne and Gordon, 1993). Information that is delivered to the consumer through mobile devices needs to show qualitative features like accuracy, timeliness, and usefulness (Siau and Shen, 2003). Information is seen as a useful tool in mobile marketing, because receivers of the messages react positively to advertisements that transfer information incentives (Varshney, 2003). The informativeness of advertising information has been strongly linked to the advertising value when the advertisement is transmitted by traditional media vehicles (Ducoffe, 1995). Stewart and Pavlou (2002) pointed out the relevance of interactive media such as, for example, the internet, as an information broker allowing “the customer to acquire real-time account information *that was previously not available.*” The study concluded that information is seen as an added value by the consumer and the consumer may even be ready to pay for it in certain cases (Stewart and Pavlou, 2002).

- Entertainment

Entertainment refers to the ability to arouse aesthetic enjoyment (Oh and Xu, 2003). McQuail (1998) determined that the information gratification sought after and attained from the media included following items: (i) “escaping or being diverted from problems;” (ii) “relaxing;” (iii) “getting intrinsic cultural or aesthetic enjoyment;” (iv) “filling time;” (v) “gaining emotional release;” and (vi) “experiencing sexual arousal”.

Media providers design their programs to entertain (DeVito, 1994). Media providers do this in order to gain the attention of the largest possible group, so they may sell this attention to the advertisers, which is the major reason why mass communications exist (DeVito, 1994). In democratic countries, if the media did not entertain, they would be out of business (DeVito, 1994). The entertainment value of advertising information is linked to

the value of traditional advertising (Ducoffe, 1995). Besides, if users get pleasure and involvement while interacting with computer-based media, this leads to coexisting subjective perceptions of positive affect and mood of the consumer of the media (Hoffman and Novak, 1996). In a study by Brackett and Carr (2001), entertainment was seen as one of the attitudinal factors affecting people’s evaluation of an advertisement. The experience of enjoyment that people feel towards advertisements play the greatest role in accounting for their overall attitudes toward the advertisements (Shavitt et al., 1998). Entertainment signifies its full ability to fulfill consumers’ needs (McQuail, 1983). Entertainment is a major factor for marketing in the mobile world, it is therefore essential that the message be short, snappy, and funny and immediately able to capture consumers’ attention (Katterbach, 2002). Online advertising, which includes entertaining elements, attains a more positive evaluation by consumers and a higher intention to revisit the homepage, compared with web sites with no entertaining features (Raney et al., 2003).

- Credibility

Flanagin and Metzger (2007) separated credibility into two key components: trustworthiness and expertise, both of which have objective and subjective components. Trustworthiness is essentially based on subjective factors but it can include objective measurements such as established reliability. According to Flanagin and Metzger (2007), expertise can in a similar fashion be subjectively perceived but it also includes relatively objective characteristics of the source or message (e.g., credentials, certification or information quality). Credibility of an advertising medium can be defined in terms of consumers’ perceptions of the average believability of a channel’s overall advertising content (Kiousis, 2001). Thus, credibility relates to the channel or the medium that it is delivered within. Each medium has its own image and personality (Aaker and Brown, 1972), therefore, it is logical to claim that each channel has an intrinsic level of credibility. Research has shown that the advertising medium itself influences consumers’ perceptions of the ads it carries. Credibility perceptions have been shown to vary depending upon users’ motivations and orientations toward specific

media and media content (Greenberg and Roloff, 1974; Mulder 1980). MacKenzie and Lutz (1989) identified advertising credibility as consumers' general perception towards the truthfulness, reliability, trustworthiness and believability of an advertisement. Advertisement credibility is affected by many different factors, especially by the company's credibility and the person who delivers the message (Goldsmith, et al., 2000).

Experiments and field studies have demonstrated a link between face-to-face conversations and trust, including higher rates of cooperation in social dilemma tasks (Rocco, 1998). The trust level is a measure of belief in another entity and a measure of belief in the honesty, competence, security and dependability of this entity. The social models incorporate the use of Computer-Mediated-Communication (CMC) technology and human interaction cues to assess the trustworthiness of entities (Schneider et al., 2000). In sociology, studies prefer to define trust as institution-based trust. In social psychology, trust usually refers to trusting beliefs and trusting intentions (McKnight and Chervany, 2002). Smith and Barclay (1997) suggested that trust is a cognitive expectation or emotional viewpoint. It is also a behavior bearing risk or willingness to be engaged in the risky behavior. If the object of trust is an organization, then trust is defined as the customers' dependence on service quality and reliability offered by that organization (Garbarino and Johnson, 1999).

- Behavior of Ad Avoidance and Using time

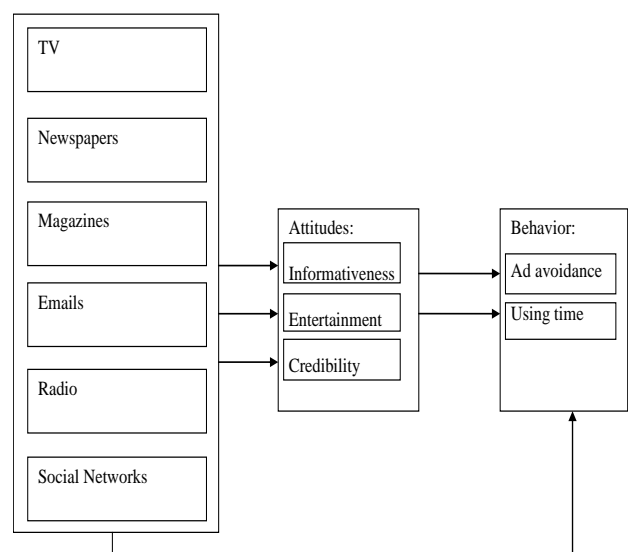
The cognitive component of ad avoidance consists of a consumer's belief about an object (e.g., Internet ads), which is evaluative in nature (Ajzen, 1991). The more negative beliefs associated with internet ads, the more unfavorable the overall cognitive component is presumed to be, leading to cognitive avoidance response. It is argued that consumer behavior, such as advertisement avoidance, may be a result of consumers' general negative attitudes toward advertising (Li et al., 2002). In a study by Speck and Elliott (1997), ad avoidance was seen to include all actions by media users that differentially lowered their exposure to advertising material. Speck and Elliott (1997) stated that people avoid ads by cognitive, behavioral, and mechanical means, while constantly evaluating their alternatives. People form preferences of content and habits of

processing, including general attitudes toward advertising and patterns of ad avoidance (Speck and Elliott, 1997). Ad avoidance becomes a part of a person's overall media style. People who change channels (also known as zapping) during television commercials also zap programs and even leave the room (Heeter and Greenberg, 1985; and Abernethy, 1991). Heeter and Greenberg (1985) noticed that zapping television ads correlates with zapping radio ads. Bellamy and Walker (1996) made a similar finding that flipping television channels correlated with flipping through newspaper and magazine pages. Comstock (1975) study found remarkable changes in time use during the postwar decades, including a sharp increase in time devoted to the mass media, especially to television, and a decrease in time devoted to sleep and rest, movies, social gatherings, and household tasks. Robinson and Converse (1972) looked at the changes in media use patterns as a function of the increasing use of television in the sixties. Hornik and Schlinger (1981) hypothesized that media time use is a matter of taste.

3. Conceptual Framework and Research Methodology

The conceptual framework is based on the works of Tsang et al. (2004), Danaher and Rossiter (2011), Larkin (1979), Speck and Elliot (1997), Olney et al. (1991), Ko et al. (2005), and Hornik and Schlinger (1981).

Figure 1: Modified Conceptual Framework



Source: created by the author for this study

Based on the objectives and conceptual framework of this study, eleven hypotheses were formed. They were divided into three main groups.

- Group A (1-5): Five hypotheses were formed to test if there was a difference between media and attitudes and between media and behavior in terms of ad avoidance and using time.

H1o: *There is no difference in attitudes in terms of informativeness based on different media*

H2o: *There is no difference in attitudes in terms of entertainment based on different media.*

H3o: *There is no difference in attitudes in terms of credibility based on different media*

H4o: *There is no difference between media and ad avoidance.*

H5o: *There is no difference between media and used time.*

- Group B (6-8): These hypotheses were formed to find the relationship between media attitudes (informativeness, entertainment and credibility) and consumer behavior in terms of ad avoidance.

H6o: *There is no relationship between media attitudes of informativeness and consumer behavior in terms of ad avoidance.*

H7o: *There is no relationship between media attitudes of entertainment and consumer behavior in terms of ad avoidance.*

H8o: *There is no relationship between media attitudes of credibility and consumer behavior in term of ad avoidance.*

- Group C (9-11): The last three hypotheses were formed to find the relationship between media and consumer behavior in term of used time.

H9o: *There is no relationship between media attitudes of informativeness and consumer behavior in term of used time.*

H10o: *There is no relationship between media attitudes of entertainment and consumer behavior in term of used time.*

H11o: *there is no relationship between media attitudes of credibility and consumer behavior in term of used time.*

Data for this study was obtained by distributing questionnaires to 402 respondents living in Helsinki Metropolitan Area, Tampere and Turku.

Non-probability Judgment and Quota Sampling were used for this research. The

total sample size was 402. Three city areas were selected; each of them with an assigned quota of 134.

The primary data was collected through the use of the survey method (July-September 2011). The questionnaire contains 21 questions for each media. The first 17 questions, used to measure customer's perception of three different factors (informativeness, entertainment, and credibility), were adapted from Wang and Sun (2010), Wang et al. (2009), Prendergast et al. (2009), Ko et al. (2005), and Pollay and Mittal (1993). Questions 17-21 were adapted from Nelson et al. (2004) and Speck and Elliott (1997). The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used for the statistical analysis. The data was analyzed by using ANOVA and Pearson correlation coefficient.

4. Results and Discussion

As Table 1 below shows, the majority of the respondents who participated in this study were below 25 years old, had a high school level of education and earned a monthly income of 1,700 Euros or less. Slightly over half of them were single and also over half of them females.

Table 1: Summary of majority percentages of respondents

| Sample profile | Majority respondents (in percentage) |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Age | 25 or below (40.8%) |
| Educational level | High school (47.5%) |
| Income per month | Below 1,700 Euro (46.8%) |
| Marital status | Single (54.5%) |
| Gender | Female (57.2%) |

The highest means for attitudes pertain to newspapers for informativeness and credibility attitudes. Magazines were considered to be the most entertaining. Emails received the lowest mean of the three attitudes measured. It can be concluded that newspapers are perceived to be the highest source of information while being

credible at the same time. Newspapers are also the least avoided media for their ads. The highest mean using time was for the radio and the lowest for magazines. For a summary of hypothesis testing, see Appendix One.

Based on the results of Hypotheses 1 and 3 (H1 and H3), there is a difference between the type of media (TV, newspapers, magazines, radio, emails and social networks) and the attitudes involved (informative, entertainment and credibility). This means that the users of media view different media with different attitudes. This supports the findings of Shavitt et al. (2004).

In the light of the results of Hypothesis 4 (H4), there is difference between the type of media (TV, newspapers, magazines, radio, emails and social networks) and ad avoidance. This means that there is a difference between the media and how the users of media avoid ads in different media and there is a difference in how much effort people exert to avoid ads depending on the media.

Based on the results of Hypothesis 5 (H5), there is a difference between the type of media (TV, newspapers, magazines, radio, emails and social networks) and used time. This means that there is a difference between the media and how media users are exposed to different lengths of time depending on the user preference. The highest mean was for radio, but it is good for marketers to keep in mind Speck and Elliotts' (1998) interpretation according to which radio program involvement is low for radio listeners, therefore, not making it necessarily the most efficient media for ads.

The results of Hypothesis 6 (H6), indicate that there is a relationship between informative attitudes of newspapers, magazines, emails and social networks and ad avoidance. This indicates that informative attitudes in newspapers, magazines, emails and social networks play a role in media users' ad avoidance behavior.

Based on the results of Hypothesis 7 (H7), there is a relationship between entertainment attitudes of magazines and emails and ad avoidance. Magazines received the highest mean for entertainment attitudes and emails, the lowest mean from all of the six media studied. This could be interpreted as suggesting that magazine ads will not be viewed if they do not conform to the expectation that magazines should be entertaining. Regarding emails, it could be

seen as meaning that if email ads were considered to be entertaining, they would be less avoided.

In the light of the results of Hypothesis 8 (H8), there is a relationship between credibility attitudes of magazines and emails. In their study on advertising Shavitt et al.'s (2004) determined that TV was rated significantly more negatively than ads in any other medium in terms of perceived harmfulness, and trustworthiness. Attitudes toward advertising on TV and on the radio were significantly lower than attitudes toward ads in any other medium.

The results of Hypothesis 9 (H9), indicate there is a relationship between the informative attitudes of TV, newspapers, magazines radio, emails and social networks and used time. This means for all six media studied the used time is affected if it is regarded as being informative.

Based on Hypothesis 10 (H10), there is a relationship between the entertaining attitudes of TV, newspapers, magazines radio, emails and social networks and used time. This indicates that it matters if media users consider the media to be entertaining.

The results of Hypothesis 11 (H11), indicate there is a relationship between the credibility attitudes of TV, newspapers, magazines, radio, emails and social networks and used time. This suggests that it matters if the media is considered to be credible, which is in line with the results by Ko et al. (2005).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated the potential factors that could influence the behavior of Finnish media users. These findings may help marketers improve their understanding of Finnish media users' attitudes and behavior. If Finnish marketers look for the appropriate media for their marketing strategy, they should take a look at how Finnish media users view various media. The following are some suggestions which could help Finnish marketers reach their target audience with minimal irritation caused by their ads and therefore with no avoidance of those ads. The results show that online email and social network advertising is still an inadequate replacement for advertisers. This finding is consistent with Ahlers' (2006) research. H1 and H3 show that when deciding the proper media channel, marketers should make sure

that the intent of the ad is in line with the attitude held by Finnish media users.

It is relevant for marketer to notice that email has the highest mean ad avoidance. This could be related to the fact that generally media users consider email as a media meant for work, for intimate communication or as part of goal impediment (Cho and Cheon, 2004). This is supported by the fact that email had the lowest mean for entertaining attitudes. This is consistent with the finding that people avoid these ads to get to the wanted content of the given media (Abernethy, 1991).

H 5 suggests that radio is a good media for ads. Although it does not need high involvement, it requires long time exposure to be effective. As to newspapers, magazines, emails and social networks, marketers could consider the informativeness of their messages in order to reduce ad avoidance. For TV and radio, ad avoidance might be a generally learned pattern of behavior (Heeter and Greenberg, 1985). This seems to be supported in part by the lack of relationship between informative attitudes and ad avoidance behavior for TV and radio. In order to reach this group of people who avoids ads, marketers should consider grabbing their attention within the first few seconds of the commercial before these viewers have had time to switch to another channel.

Also for H7 Goal impediment has been suggested as being the reason why internet is the media where users avoid ads the most (Cho and Cheon, 2004).

H8 partly confirms Shavitt et al.'s (2004) findings. The mean attitude was the third lowest for the TV. The difference could be explained by the fact that this study also considered the attitudes of emails and social networks which had even higher mean of ad avoidance. As Kelly et al.'s (2010) study suggests, ads are more likely to be avoided in the online social network environment if (i) the media user has expectations of a negative experience, (ii) the ad is not considered relevant by the user, (iii) the user is skeptical of the ads message, or (iv) the user is skeptical toward the media of the ad.

H9 to H11 indicate that marketers should use media and within media use a medium that is considered informative, entertaining, and credible in order to increase the exposure media users will have with regard to that particular ad.

Another important issue to address here is whether new types of media can operate as product substitutes. Based on the data and the statistical analysis obtained from the responses from Finnish participants, it seems that in terms of respondents' attitudes and behaviour, new types of media are not yet capable to deliver all that has been promised from them. To increase the effectiveness of the ads in social networks, the researcher suggests using context-appropriate product placements in social networks as has been done in the TV and gaming industry. This suggestion is supported by the studies of Nelson et al. (2004) and DeLorme, and Reid (1999). Based on their results with respect to attitudes, it seems that marketers still have to rely on the traditional media to influence people through media since people consider it to be informative, entertaining and credible, all of which increasing the exposure that people will have towards ads in these media. Marketers in Finland spend most of their funds on newspapers (Official Statistics of Finland, 09/04/2011). In terms of attitudes, this seems to be justified. Also, marketers should remember that used time is not among the highest for newspapers as compared to other media. Their effectiveness could be part of the user involvement which would require less time for the advertisement to be effective.

- Further research

As the findings suggest, it can be concluded that attitudes have an impact on ad avoidance and used time, each type of media having a different level of impact on the behavior of the user. Future studies should look for channel-specific factors affecting attitudes and behavior. Further, studies should consider taking into account more media like Danaher and Rossiter (2011) did when he compared 11 media. Product placement should be studied and its effectiveness in different types of media assessed. How product placements are viewed in terms of attitudes in different media should also be explored. Moreover, media exposure efficiency should be looked at. Several situational factors can affect the efficiency of exposure. Cost benefit analysis should be looked at consistent with Kim et al. (1999) as should also be the case with user involvement. This is a possible factor for future research. Further issues worth investigating in more details include studying whether ad avoidance with regard to each type

of media is related to ad clutter or some other perceived aspect. Goal impediment should also be added to any future research as Cho and Cheon (2004) suggests.

Lastly, this paper focused only on Finnish media users. It is very likely that owing to cultural diversity, findings would be quite different from country to country. In fact, even inside Finland the results might differ when taking rural areas into the sphere of study.

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