



Effect Of Branding On Consumer Patronage Of Locally Processed Rice In South East Nigeria

EMODI, Peter Nwachukwu

Department of Marketing, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam

ABSTRACT

This work examined effect of branding on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South East Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study include determining the effect of brand name, brand image, brand orientation, internal branding and brand loyalty on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South East Nigeria. Relevant conceptual, theoretical and empirical literatures were reviewed. The study adopted survey research design. A total of six processed rice namely Anambra Rice, Oyo-Oyo rice, JOSAN rice, Rems Gold parboiled and destoned rice, Abakiliki rice and Ebony Super were studied. The population of the study comprises of employees the selected farms and all those who buy processed rice of these agro firms. Purposive sampling technique was used to arrive at sample size of three hundred and sixty respondents. The major instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire. The data generated were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis. In this study, brand name, brand image, brand orientation, internal branding and brand identity are employed as the independent variables while consumer patronage of locally processed rice is employed as the dependent variable. The study found that brand image, brand name, brand orientation and brand loyalty have significant effect on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South East Nigeria. The study also discovered that internal branding has no significant effect on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South East Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study concludes that branding strategy has significant effect on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South East Nigeria. The study recommends that producers of agricultural products should embrace packaging and branding as it will improve their marketing performance.

Key words: Branding, Consumer Patronage

INTRODUCTION

Many marketing firms in the global market have realized that branding is a vital initiative that can ensure survival in the market. This led to the increase of brands and branding activities as firms were aggressively looking for mechanism to emerge and stay on top of the competition in the market. Branding thus, turns a generic product into an entity with a name and with attributes which can evoke feeling and which has distinctive personality. Kotler (2000) quotes the American Marketing Association definition of a brand as 'a name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of them intended to identify goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of other sellers'. The use of signs, symbols and artifacts would allow explaining the process of unfolding services, reducing time spent by customers and creating the feeling of effectiveness for customers. This implies that branding is not about getting your target market to choose you over the competition, but it is about getting your prospects to see you as the only one that provides a solution to their problem (Kalu, Anyanwu, Maduenyoghasi & Udo, 2014).

Branding of agricultural produce is a strategy that may be adopted in enhancing the marketing of agricultural produce in Nigeria. Branding of agricultural produce can be used as external clue to taste, design, qualify, prestige, value and so forth. In other words, consumers usually associate the value of product with brand, since branding of agricultural produce serve as a signal to the customer, the source of the product and protect both customer and the producer from competitors who attempt to provide product

that appear to be identical (Nzuki, 2011). Though branding has become a central issue in any product strategy, including agricultural produce, selecting a particular brand name, which carries the agricultural produce throughout its life, has become a problem. It is important that the name selected must be the one that is capable of ensuring the success of the product in the market place (Kotler, 1999). In addition, standardized system of grading and measurement, which enhances marketing efficiency, is not a feature of agricultural produce in the market. The fact is that grades are determined arbitrarily by sizes, while measures come in various types. This constitutes a problem to a marketer because branding of a agricultural produce cannot take place without determining the level of standard and grading. Local processing also contributes to the problem traceable to its high cost and time-demand (Orebiyi, 2002).

Traditionally, branding is for large company's issue, and rarely considered as an issue in agricultural sector. Although it is presumed that branding is important and takes effects on marketing performance (Keller, 2003), producers and marketers of agricultural products especially in developing countries finds it difficult to invest in branding formally. Most of them are not fully aware of the importance of branding while others face the limited financial and human resources, or lack of branding know-how, or the like. For some marketers and producers of agricultural products, branding is often considered as a luxury, not an investment. As branding requires long-term strategy, adequate efforts and resources, marketers and producers especially that of agricultural products are reluctant to start or pursue branding activities, even if they are quite interested in changing to better marketing practices (Lukoma & Nguyen, 2011).

Over the past few years, a steady growth has been recorded in the agricultural sector in Nigeria due to government emphasis on agriculture as an effective alternative to oil sector revenue (Orebiyi, 2002).. This has resulted in increased competition and, in some cases, unfair competition because of the invasion of foreign agricultural products on the market especially foreign rice and a host of other agricultural products. This has necessitated the need for effective branding of processed rice for easy identification and patronage. Marketers and producers of processed rice are yet to be convinced on the need to utilize the force of their brands in respect to their competitors in the consumer goods markets. It is against this background that branding is increasingly necessary due to the influx of smuggled and fake foreign products in the system, and that branding goes down to the very core of survival for companies and serve as a competitive advantage in the marketplace. In order to differentiate one processed rice from another, it is expedient to create a corporate image or brand that would make the difference.

Empirically, branding strategy has received an extensive attention in the literature (Lamprey, 2016), but its effect on consumer patronage of locally processed rice has not been adequately explored. Similarly, so many sectors like consumer goods, mobile services, tourism sectors etc have been examined but few studies exist in the agricultural sector. Similarly, various recent studies of this nature were conducted by scholars mainly outside Nigeria based on the literature reviewed. The literatures revealed only a few recent similar studies (Ikporah, 2012; Adegbuyi, Ajagbe, Kehinde, Adegbuyi & Akande, 2016; Umar and Abdu, 2016; Ogbuji, Anyanwu and Onah, 2011; Okpara, 2007; Uduji, Edicha and Oyaka, 2012; Kalu, Anyanwu, Maduenyoghasi and Udo, 2014, Ola, Ajayi and Olaoye, 2015, Onigbinde and Odunlami 2015) were conducted in Nigeria. There is no empirical evidence of similar studies covering locally processed rice in the entire South-East zone of Nigeria. Hence, this study is hypothesized to fill this gap. This study therefore is aiming to figure out evidences of the branding's effects on consumer patronage of locally processed rice, and then encourages producers of locally processed rice to adopt branding more aggressively and effectively. Specifically, this study examined the effect of brand name, brand image, brand orientation, internal branding and brand loyalty on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South East Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Branding

Branding is one of the most important components of marketing. Branding is a term used to describe the name, description and design of a product (Ikporah, 2012). Perreault and McCarthy (2002) sees branding as the use of a name, term, symbol or design or a combination of these to identify a product, In addition, it is the use of a distinctive name and mark on a product to differentiate it from similar competitive products. Arens (2002) notes that branding refers to the fundamental differentiation devise for all

products; it includes, name, words, symbols, or designs that identify the product and its source and distinguishes it from competing products. The American Marketing Association in Kotler and Keller (2009) define a brand as a “name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors”. Nwaizugbo (2004) defined branding as “a process of establishing a product identity”. It is a concept adopted by companies to identify their products and distinguish them from those of competitors. Nebo (2000) argues that branding is the act of identifying a product or service with a name, a sign, symbol or design or the combination of them which is intended to distinguish the products or services of one seller or group of sellers from those of competitors. Branding is of immense benefits both to the manufacturer and consumer. Nebo (2000) further states that branding helps consumer spend less time while shopping.

Kotler and Armstrong (2012) are of the view that a brand is a complex symbol that can convey up to six levels of meaning; attributes, benefits, values, culture, personality and uses. Successful brands are those which create this image or personality by encouraging consumers to perceive the attributes they aspire to as being strongly associated with the brand. The personality of the brand is a function of its rational characteristics, but this has to be augmented and communicated to consumers through advertising, design, packaging and effective distribution and display. Brands vary in the amount of power and value they have in the market place. Some brands are usually not noticed by the customers in the marketplace while other brands show high degree of popularity. The brands with high popularity have a high level of patronage and customers do not relent to buy such brands as they enjoy the brand performance. Some brands command high level of brand loyalty due to equity they created (Alamgir, 2010).

Brand Name

Names are a means of identification, a focal point for repetitions, not substance; they are cure for anonymity, yet not a guarantee of reward (Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006). Brand names serve to create identity- to distinguish one product from another. Identity is essential to competition because without a means of identification, there is no way of making a choice except by happenstance. Brand name, therefore, not only facilitates choice, it is a spur to responsible action (Holden, 1993).

Brand Image

Brand image, is a symbolic construct created within the minds of people and consists of all the information and expectations associated with a product or service. People engaged in branding seek to develop or align the expectations behind the brand experience, creating the impression that a brand associated with a product or service has certain qualities or characteristics that make it special or unique (Dodds, et al., 1991). Brand image is the reputation of the firm with the various audiences that are important to it. These groups that have a stake in the company are known as stakeholders. Stakeholders are affected by the actions of the establishment and, in turn, their actions can affect the company.

Brand Loyalty

The American Marketing Association defines brand loyalty as “the situation in which a consumer generally buys the same manufacturer-originated product or service repeatedly over time rather than buying from multiple suppliers within the category” or “the degree to which a consumer consistently purchases the same brand within a product class”. According to Investopedia (2017), brand loyalty is “a pattern of consumer behavior where consumers become committed to brands and make repeat purchases from the same brands over time. Loyal customers consistently purchase products from their preferred brands, regardless of convenience or price.

Internal Branding

Internal branding is a corporate philosophy that focuses on bringing the company’s core culture, identity and premise to its employees as well as its consumers, and usually looks to make workers at all levels “ambassadors” or true representatives of the company and its values. Internal branding refers to having a continuous process in place by which you ensure your employees understand the “who” and “why: behind your business proposition (Mckee, 2009). Internal branding is explained as the set of strategic processes that align and empower employees to deliver the brand promise in a consistent manner (Punjaisri and Wilson, 2007). Tosti and Stolts (2001) argue that the brand will succeed when the management align the

firm around the service brand. Focus has to be made for the brand in order to express a pure direction for the whole firm. Internal branding is considered as a means to create powerful corporate brands.

Brand Orientation

Urde (1999) define brand orientation as an approach in which the processes of the organization revolve around the creation, development and protection of brand identity in an ongoing interaction with target customers with the aim of achieving lasting competitive advantages in the form of brands. Merrilees (2005) see brand orientation as the extent to which the brand becomes a central and coordinating element or core of a marketing strategy. Brand orientation lays the foundation for all marketing activities and, thus it should be taken into account in the strategic marketing planning of a firm

Consumer Patronage

Consumer patronage is the degree to which a buying unit concentrates purchases over time to a particular product; consumer patronage develops through positive reinforcement and repetition of buying behavior (Oliver, 1997). According to the New Webster Dictionary (1994), patronage can be said to mean “the material help and encouragement given by a patron, in this instance the patron is seen to be a customer in an exchange transaction. It could also mean “the act of being a regular customer to a shop. In a highly competitive industry, such as banking, satisfying the customers should be the primary focus of firms that wish to sustain patronage (Sulek and Hensley, 2004). Behavioral scientists believe that customer patronage results from an initial product that is reinforced through satisfaction, leading to repeat purchase. Cognitive researchers emphasize the role of mental process in building consumer patronage. They believe that the consumers engage in extensive problem solving behavior involving services and attribute compassions, leading to strong customer preferences and repeat purchase. Marketers are interested not only on how customer patronage develops but also when it develops.

Theoretical Framework

This study was based on Nicosia model. In Nicosia (1969) a consumer is an individual who purchases, or has the capacity to purchase goods and services offered for sale by marketing institutions in order to satisfy personal or household needs, wants or desires. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (1987), the Nicosia focuses on the relationship between the firm and its potential consumers. The firm communicates with the consumers through its marketing messages (advertising) or inscriptions on the packaging and consumers also communicate with the firm through their purchase responses. The Nicosia model is interactive in design. Nicosia model is divided into four major fields (Goodhope, 2013) namely, the consumer’s attitude based on the firm’s message; search and evaluation; the act of purchase; and feedback.

This study draws its assumptions from this model in that, branding and its attributes are part of communication to consumers which the firms hope could influence consumers to patronize their product. Consumers in turn, are becoming sophisticated in their search for correct information that can aid their buying decisions. The model noted that consumer forms preferences among the brands in the choice set and may also form an intention to buy the most preferred brand. Marketers must monitor post purchase satisfaction, post-purchase action and post purchase product uses. Satisfied customers tend to use positive word of mouth about the brand to others, which is why many marketers say “our best advertisement is a satisfied customer”. Dissatisfied customers, on the other hand, may abandon or return the product, seek information that confirms its high value, take public action by complaining to the company or taking the course of law thereby affecting the brand negatively.

Empirical Review

Ikporah (2012) examined branding strategy for effective agricultural marketing in Nigeria. The study covered five South-East states of Nigeria. The population of this study comprised of all producers and marketers of agricultural products in South-Eastern States of Nigeria. Frequency and percentage tables, charts and means, standard deviations, Z-test statistics and 2-Related Samples (Z) test. The study found that branding strategy has effect on the marketing of agricultural products in Nigeria. The study also found that branding influences the choice of consumers of agricultural products. Also, branding was found to have contributions to profit making among agricultural producers.

Uduji, Edicha and Oyaka (2012) examined agricultural produce branding for consumers in Nigeria. The descriptive survey targeted Kogi – one of the agricultural States in Nigeria. The study population comprised 400 farmers from nine Local Government Areas in Kogi State, which has three senatorial districts. Data were analyzed using Average Mean Score statistical tool. Majority of the respondents showed a greater positive response on the branding of agricultural produce for Nigeria. It was discovered from the findings that branding of agricultural produce helps to attract more customers and also to influence customers' perception in addition to creating promotional advantages. It also showed that branding as a strategy increases sales revenue and equally helps to maintain brand loyalty of the customers.

Kalu, Anyanwu, Maduenyoghasi and Udo (2014) examined the effect of brand extension strategy on marketing performance of soft drinks bottling firms in Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design. Analysis of the data through the use of descriptive tables and Pearson Correlation Coefficient of the SPSS package, shows that a significant percentage of the total soft drinks products sold on annual bases belong to the extended brands of the parent products.

Yatundu, Abuga and Olala (2015) examined the effect of branding strategy on performance of public sugar manufacturing firms in Kenya. The data was analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics and the findings indicated that, Brand name and Image had a positive and significant influence on the performance of public sugar firms.

Yeboah et al (2013) conducted a similar study on the role of branding in Ghana's Telecommunication Industry. Their findings stated that there was statistically insignificant correlation between trademarks and the choice of network, indicating that trademark does not significantly impact on sales of mobile networks. The study however found that brand quality significantly impact on sales of mobile network in Ghana, though it is not the most important factor in the telecommunication industry.

Umar and Abdu (2016) examined the effect of brand name on consumer purchase intention in Kano Metropolis. Convenient sampling technique was employed to obtain representative response from a sample of 306 customers of Shoprite retail chain in Kano State, Nigeria. Product Knowledge, Brand Satisfaction, Brand Trust, Brand Attachment, Low Price and past experience were employed as the explanatory variable while Purchase Intention was employed as the independent variable. The data generated were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. It was found that product knowledge, brand satisfaction, brand trust, brand attachment, low price and past experience were found to have significant effect of purchase intention.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey research approach. Primary source of data was employed in this study. The primary data were sourced through the use of questionnaires administered to the respondents selected for this study. The population for this research is the total number of people that consume locally processed rice of selected farms and the employees of these farms in South-East Geo-political zones. The population of the study constituted employees of companies that produce Anambra Rice, Oyo-Oyo Rice, JOSAN Rice, Rems Gold Parboiled and Destoned Rice, Abakiliki Rice and Ebony Super; and all those who buy processed rice of these agro firms. A total of 50 consumers were chosen from each of the state that makes up South East geopolitical zone and 10 employees from each of the producers of the processed rice. Thus the sample size for the study is three hundred and sixty respondents. Questionnaire was employed as the major instrument of data collection. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation were employed in analyzing the data.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Here the individual characteristics of the variables (both dependent and independent) used in this study were examined. The descriptive statistics shows the minimum value, maximum value, mean and standard deviation of the variables used in the study. The result is presented in table 1 below.

Table 1 Summary of the Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Consumer Patronage of Locally Processed Rice	319	13	25	20.18	3.146
Brand Name	319	13	25	17.98	2.429
Brand Image	319	13	25	18.38	3.045
Brand Orientation	319	5	23	13.38	5.118
Internal Branding	319	13	25	17.96	2.485
Brand Loyalty	319	13	25	18.37	2.959
Valid N (listwise)	319				

Source: SPSS Ver. 21.0

This table present the summary of statistics used in the analysis. It provides information about the mean and standard deviation of the variables used in the study. Consumer patronage of locally processed rice has a mean value of 20.18 with a standard deviation of 3.146. Brand name recorded a mean value of 17.98 with a standard deviation of 2.429. Brand image recorded a mean value of 18.38 with a standard deviation of 3.045.

Furthermore, brand orientation has a mean value of 13.38 with a standard deviation of 5.118. Internal branding recorded a mean value of 17.96 with a standard deviation of 2.485 while brand loyalty recorded a mean value of 18.37 with a standard deviation of 2.959. Low values of standard deviation for each of the variables indicate a consensus on statements associated with each of the variables.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation was employed to measure the strength of relationship between variables especially between the dependent and independent variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient is a measure of the strength of a linear association between two variables and a measures of the existence or otherwise of multicollinearity in the research model. The result of the analysis is presented in table 2 below.

Table 2 Correlation Matrix

		Consumer Patronage of Locally Processed Rice	Brand Name	Brand Image	Brand Orientation	Internal Branding	Brand Loyalty
Consumer Patronage of Locally Processed Rice	Pearson Correlation	1	.642**	.749**	.533	.230**	.531**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.006	.000	.000
	N	319	319	319	319	319	319
Brand Name	Pearson Correlation	.642**	1	.316**	-.095	.815**	.267**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.091	.000	.000
	N	319	319	319	319	319	319
Brand Image	Pearson Correlation	.749**	.316**	1	-.232**	.268**	.805**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	319	319	319	319	319	319
Brand Orientation	Pearson Correlation	.533	-.095	-.232**	1	-.058	-.118*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.091	.000		.300	.035
	N	319	319	319	319	319	319
Internal Branding	Pearson Correlation	.230**	.815**	.268**	-.058	1	.380**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.300		.000
	N	319	319	319	319	319	319
Brand Loyalty	Pearson Correlation	.531**	.267**	.805**	-.118*	.380**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.035	.000	
	N	319	319	319	319	319	319

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

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Ver. 21.0

The table above shows the extent of association between the dependent and independent variables used in the study. Brand name recorded a correlation coefficient of 0.643 with consumer patronage of locally processed rice which is statistically significant. This indicates that brand name has a positive strong effect on consumer patronage of locally processed rice. Brand image recorded a correlation coefficient value of 0.749 with consumer patronage of locally processed rice which is statistically significant. This indicates that brand image has a positive strong effect on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South East Nigeria. Brand orientation recorded a correlation coefficient of 0.533 with consumer patronage of locally processed rice which is statistically significant. This shows that brand orientation has a moderate positive effect on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South East Nigeria.

Furthermore, the association between internal branding and consumer patronage of locally processed rice recorded a correlation value of 0.230 which is statistically significant. This shows that internal branding has a weak positive effect on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South-East Nigeria. Brand loyalty recorded a correlation coefficient of 0.531 with consumer patronage of locally processed rice. This indicates that brand loyalty has a moderate positive effect on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South East Nigeria.

Finally, since there is no correlation coefficient in greater than 0.8 which is the rule of thumb, we conclude that explanatory variables (brand name, brand image, brand orientation, internal branding and brand loyalty) are not perfectly linearly correlated. Therefore, there is no problem of multicollinearity in the model used in this study.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This work examined the effect of branding strategy on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South East Nigeria. The data generated were subjected to statistical analysis and the following became obvious. Brand name was found to have significant effect on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South East Nigeria. This finding agrees with the findings of Yatundu, Abuga and Olala (2015) that brand name had a positive and significant influence on the performance of public sugar firms. This is also supported by the findings of Adegbuyi, Ajagbe, Kehinde, Adegbuyi & Akande (2016) that product branding is very significant to improving sales performance of manufacturing firms. Schulz (2012) noted that brand name attracts customers easily

The study further found that brand image has a significant effect on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South East Nigeria. This shows that when consumers have a favorable brand image, the brand's messages have a stronger influence in comparison to competitor brand messages thereby leading to improve consumer patronage. Brand image stems from all of customers consumption experiences and perceived services quality is a function of this consumption experiences hence customers perception about service quality directly affects brand image. The importance of brand in the market is influenced by company's ability to evaluate how consumers interpret the image of brands and company's ability to manage the strategy of brand positioning, adequately revealing brand's equity to a consumer. This collaborates the findings of Yatundu, Abuga and Olala (2015) that brand image had a positive and significant influence on the performance of public sugar firms. Similarly, it is in line with the finding of Kalembe (2015) that brand image has a significant relationship with tourism performance in Rwanda.

Brand orientation has a significant effect on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South East Nigeria. This shows that management systematically integrates the organization's mission, vision and values into its brand. This agrees with the findings of Ikorah (2012) that branding strategy has effect on the marketing of agricultural products and influences the choice of consumers of agricultural products in Nigeria. In line with this, Yeboah (2016) found that product branding has long-run positive impact on sales revenue.

The study also discovered that internal branding has no significant effect on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South East Nigeria. This shows that the management of the selected rice processing farms has failed to align and empower employees to deliver the brand promise in a consistent manner. The core objective of internal branding is the attainment of competitive advantage not through easily replicated core business practices and policies through employees. Therefore, the producers of processed rice have failed in this regard. The success practice of internal branding engenders a shared

brand understanding among employees which should create committed workforce who deliver on the brand promise.

Finally, brand loyalty has a significant effect on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South East Nigeria. Brand loyalty can only be achieved through a strong brand positioning which means creating and managing a unique, credible, sustainable, and valued place in the customer's minds, revolving around a benefit that helps the brand stand apart from its competition. This finding tallies with the findings of Kalembe (2015) that brand loyalty has a significant relationship with tourism performance in Rwanda.

CONCLUSION

This work examined the effect of branding on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. A total of six processed rice namely Anambra Rice, Oyo-Oyo rice, JOSAN rice, Rems Gold parboiled and destoned rice, Abakiliki rice and Ebony Super were studied. The consumers and the employees of the farms that produce these rice were sampled for the study. The data generated were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The study found that brand name has a significant effect on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South East Nigeria. Similarly, brand orientation, brand image and brand loyalty was found to have significant effect on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South East Nigeria. Internal branding was found to have an insignificant effect on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South East Nigeria.

The study has established branding as a key marketing strategy in the marketing of locally processed agricultural products. This shows that with full application of branding strategy to agricultural products, the consumers' choice are influenced, distribution and segmentation of such products and product markets are enhanced and sales performance will improve, thereby ensuring healthy competition and growth in the agricultural sector. This will go a long way in ensuring the viability of the agricultural sector in Nigeria. Therefore, the study concludes that branding strategy has significant effect on consumer patronage of locally processed rice in South East Nigeria. Based on the foregoing, the study recommends that producers of agricultural products should embrace branding as it will improve consumer patronage. Producers of agricultural products should brand their products especially through proper packaging and brand names as it will make segmentation and positioning efforts easier.

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