Effects of Client-Oriented Marketing Strategies on Perception of Enrolment: Evidence from Moi University, Kenya

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Abstract

Self Sponsored students are increasingly demanding client-oriented institutions, and universities and colleges are working to meet their demands. This study investigated on the effects of Client-Oriented Marketing Strategies (COMS) on Perception of Enrolment (PE) by students under Privately Sponsored Students Programmes (PSSP). **M**any marketing specialists are now seeing the 4Ps (Product, Place, Pricing and Promotion) as too product-oriented and have adopted the COMS's 4Cs (Customer Value, Customer Cost, Customer Convenience and Customer Communication) marketing mix. The study adopted survey design and cluster sampling was used to select the five academic schools/ faculties of Moi University. Simple random sampling was used to identify the targeted 284 individual students of the study. Questionaries was used to collect data. The results of the study showed that 4Cs affects Perception of Enrolment. Multiple Linear Regression showed that 4Cs accounted for a total variation of 55% of the changes in PE (R^2=.550), while other Marketing strategies account for 45%. The model of 4Ps to 4Cs adopted by Elliott de Sáez was used to demonstrate how Client-Oriented Marketing Strategies impacts on Perception of Enrolment. The study recommends that Moi University and other universities should pay serious attention Clint-Oriented Marketing Strategies in the marketing of their programmes since they affect the Perception of Enrolment.

Keywords: Customer Value, Customer Cost, Customer Convenience, Customer Communication, Perception of Enrolment

1.0. Introduction

The roles and functions of Kenyan public universities continue to evolve in response to the changing requirements of the students, funding commitment by the government, the expectations of the society and the influence of globalisation. While PSSP has raised considerable revenue for Kenyan Public universities, these programmes have generated discussions concerning their effect on perception of enrolment. According to DFID briefing practice paper (2007), Higher education (HE) systems in many Africa and South Asia countries are in a poor state. During 1960s and 1970s, some universities gained international reputation, which changed in 1980s and 1990s owing to suffering occasioned by pressure to expand. More students were completing primary and secondary education and the demand for higher education places was very strong. Some studies have indicated that enrolments in Technical, Industrial, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TVET) institutions have been declining. Academia Group (2011), posit that the prospect of intense competition in college enrolments has generated tremendous pressure on college administrators and educators to find effective approaches to attract students.

Enrolment in any academic institution is crucial in as far as that institution's existence and survival are concerned (Simiyu,J, 2009). The competition between traditional (public) universities, independent and private universities, is increasing with a variety of joint ventures and franchise operations fragmenting this highly competitive market .As the number of degree choices grows and prospective students have a wider variety of universities from which to choose, the need for universities to differentiate themselves from their competition is self evident (Cubillo et al, 2006).

Maringe, (2006) commending about higher education in Africa, noted that there is insufficient research and literature on student choice and decision making. In Kenya there is limited research regarding these issues.

 Kenyan Public universities marketing seems to be too engaged in reactive competition practices, focusing on traditional strategies such as 4Ps, rather than paying attention to COMS. For instance, Moi University employ 4Ps marketing strategies as clearly stipulated in its institutional strategic plan 2005-2015. This is a serious omission particularly when put in to consideration that Public and Private Universities compete for students under PSSP who have different perceptions on enrolment. COMS, when understood better on how it affects the students PE, would guide in decision-making based on well-documented and informed evidence. If utilising COMS helps academic schools to grow in terms of clientele (students), then it is expected that students will also receive positive perceptions of enrolment because of employment of client-oriented marketing strategies.

Rust and Zahorik, (1993) argued that during the initial stage of the decision making process, the potential student will evaluate potential service through information acquired. It is essential that prospective students are able to

acquire all the necessary information needed from different academic schools so as to be able to make better judgment and be contented with their choice of programme they eventually enrol in the selected academic school. .

Kotler and Armstrong, 2008), suggested five steps of student choice. They are needs and motives, information gathering, evaluating alternatives, decision and post-choice evaluation. A need, or motive, is initially triggered on the part of the student. Then as the student realizes that he/she wants to pursue University Education, he/she searches for information about potential providers. Then an evaluation between alternatives is established. The student then goes on to enroll in one of the academic schools and ends up with an evaluation of the experience. These steps are outlined in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 Student Choice Model (Adapted from, Kotler and Armstrong, 2008)
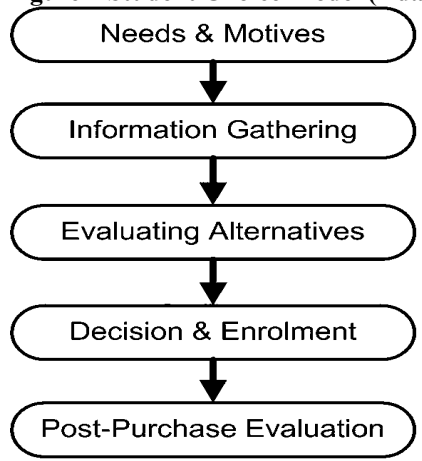
Kotler and Armstrong, (2008) also argued that comparison is established since educational institutions educate students relying on money from tuition or other sources. Maringe (2006) advances that introducing fees in higher education has resulted in greater 'consumerist behaviour' by applicants because the value for money would then begin to become a substantial issue in the decision making process.

Boone and Kurtz, (2007) recognizes the great role of teachers and schools in inspiring students to pursue higher educatin. Students' needs and motives vary in nature, while some students want to attend a university for instrumental reasons; others get motivated for personal intrinsic reasons.

The study investigated the effects client-oriented marketing strategies on perception of enrolment using selected academic schools of Moi University, Kenya.

1.1. Universities in Kenya.

The role of university education is to produce a cadre of highly qualified manpower equipped with requisite skills (Republic of Kenya, 2002a; 2005b). The society looks up to universities to take lead in generating the required knowledge, supply capable human capital and appropriate technology, and innovation needed to meet these goals (Republic of Kenya, 2005c). Currently Kenya has 22 public universities 14 Chartered Private universities and 12 universities with Letter of Interim Authority (LIA) (Ministry of Education, 2013). The admission of students to the regular programmes of public universities is done through the Joint Admissions Board (JAB), while self–sponsored streams of the public universities and private universities independently admit qualified students into their programmes. There is a fierce competition in the education industry between universities (both public and private) because they view students as consumers of their products (academic programmes). This has necessitated each university to strategise on effective marketing of their programmes.

1.2. Conceptual Framework

This study uses the model that was adopted by Elliott de Sáez (2002) from Lauterborn, (1990) in studying the effects of marketing strategies on Choice Satisfaction in selected schools of Moi Universities, Kenya. The model considers a marketing problem from the consumer's perspective. The content includes the following four points. Firstly, what the customer wants should be sold rather than what one can offer. Secondly, the institution should take every effort to decrease the cost of fulfilling the customer's demand. Thirdly, the institution should take every effort to give convenience to customer for choice. Finally, communication with customer is more important than promotion

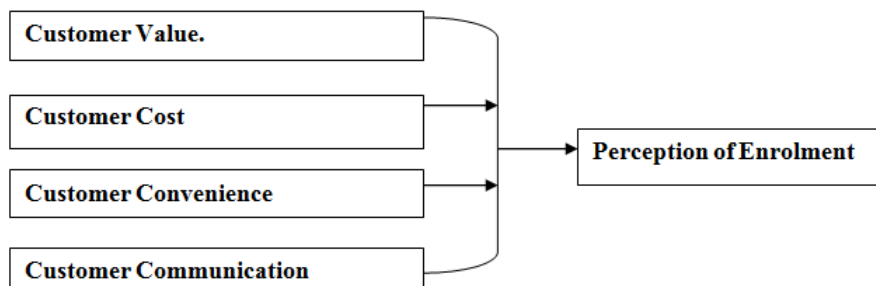Elliott de Sáez, (2002) 4Cs adopted from Lauterborn, (1990) suggested that marketers should think in terms of the four Cs instead of four Ps. He further argued that the 4Ps approach was passé and that instead marketers should examine customers' needs and wants, their costs and issues of convenience and communication. This is shown in Figure 2 below. The conception framework employed by the study is given in Figure 3.

Figure 2 showing the move from 4Ps to 4Cs

Four Ps	Four Cs
Product	Customer needs and wants
Price	Cost to the customer
Place	Convenience
Promotion	Communication
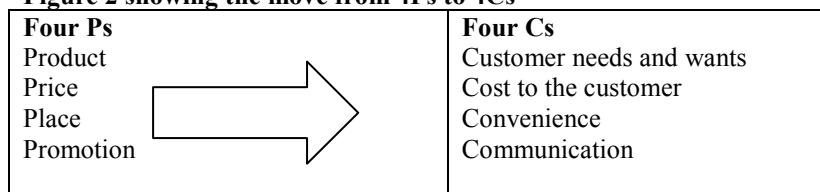
Adopted by Elliott de Sáez (2002)

Figure 3 Conceptual Framework

Source: Developed for the study (2010)
Developed by Researcher, 2011

2.0. Research Methodology

The study area was selected academic Schools of Moi University, Kenya. These Schools are; School Business and Economics (SBE), School of Law (SL), School of Environmental Studies (SES), School of Public Health (SPH) and School of Natural Resource Management (SNRM).The study characterised students by faculty, gender, age and other programmes they wish to enrol.

2.1. Research Design and Sampling Procedure

This study adopted Cross-Sectional Survey design. A sample of 284 respondents was selected for the study by employing the formulae developed (Mugenda, 2008) to determine the sample size when the population is less than 10,000. The sample frame comprised of students under PSSP. Respondents were undergraduate students under PSSP of the SBE, SL, SES, SPH and SNRM for the academic year 2009/2010. Cluster sampling was used to select the targeted schools. In order to conduct this sampling strategy, the academic schools were divided into internally heterogeneous subgroups. Five academic schools were selected for further study. Simple random sampling procedure was used to select students who participated in the study. Each PSSP undergraduate student of the selected schools had an equal opportunity to become part of the sample. In order to conduct this sampling strategy, the researcher defined the sampling frame using random numbers by numbering each of the cases in the sampling frame with a unique number, first case to be numbered 0, the second 1 and so on (Saunders *et al,* 2003).

In order to improve the response rate, the survey questionnaire was distributed to 284 PSSP students when lectures were in session or when assessments were administered. It allowed an immediate self-response by the students and collection by the researcher. Respondents were selected from a student listing provided by the institution's academic schools.

2.2. Data collection Instruments

Data was collected by means of questionnaires and document analysis. Questionnaires elicited information about students' perceptions of enrolment. The questionnaire had closed questions and items used five likert scale commonly used in social sciences to measure perceptions, attitudes, values, and behaviour (Mugenda, 2008). Early researchers have long acknowledged and recognized the importance of attributes in influencing customers' choice satisfaction (Cabillo *et al,* 2006). The choice of Questionnaire was influenced by the characteristics of the respondents from whom the researcher collected data. The measurements for perception of enrolment were based on the general feelings about Perception of Enrolment (respondent's college choice satisfaction, information satisfaction, and students' selection. Respondents were asked to give an indication of perception of enrolment levels in connection with client-oriented marketing strategies by employing a five-point Likert rating scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" with "Undecided" as the midpoint. Administering the questionnaire followed a standardised, consistent format. This facilitated replication and testing of the findings to evaluate reliability. The questionnaire was group-administered in classes.

In the document analysis, the following documents were analyzed: The Moi University's Strategic Plan 2005-2015, University's promotional publications and the university website. These were used because they are

information-rich data sources and are often loaded with an institution's cultural values and self-image. In addition, they are important to the study because they are viewed as channels through which an institution communicates to the public and prospective students. These documents were used as supplementary tools to questionnaires administered to students.

2.3. Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments
In order to enhance construct validity, adequate definitions of measures have been given by operationalization of each objective and also provision of its measuring scale. Internal validity was addressed by factoring in issues which would pose as major extraneous variables.

To successfully evaluate internal consistency and reliability among items within the two constructs, independent runs was run for each of the three constructs using Gronbach's alpha to test the reliability of the questionnaire and the draft questionnaire was pre-tested. The research pre-tested the questionnaire to 21 respondents followed by a treat in other schools and faculties that are not part of the study. These respondents were not part of the actual study process and were only used for testing purposes. The research modified the content of the questionnaire based on the assessment and suggestions of the sample respondents. The research excluded irrelevant questions and change vague or difficult terminologies into simpler ones so as to make the questionnaire more comprehensive for the selected respondents.

2.4. Data Analysis
Once the data was collected, it was examined for completeness, consistency and reliability. Returned surveys were fed into SPSS 17.0 software for analysis at 95% level of confidence. The reliability statistic computed from 60 items from each questionnaire gave unstandardized and standardized Cronbach's Alpha of 0.939 and 0.942 respectively. These were seen as good measures of reliability. The Standardized Cronbach's Alpha, of 0.942 indicated that the questionnaire was reliable and internally consistent.

Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires was analysed in order to make the data to be meaningful using inferential statistics. Factor analysis was done to determine the number of factors explained and to classify them. This helped to identify items highly loaded and was important in data analysis. The inferential statistics, specifically the Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation(r) and multiple linear regression were used. Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation is one of the best-known measures of association (Andy Field, 2005). Pearson Product Moment coefficient Correlation method was used to determine the extent of effects between Client-Oriented Marketing Strategies and Perception of Enrolment variables. Consequently, establishing a correlation between two variables is necessary but not a sufficient condition for inferring causality. Prediction is not causality and only indicates the expected variance in a dependent variable explained by the independent variables referred to as the Multiple Correlation (R^2). The R^2 for the study was 55.5% and the magnitude of correlation coefficient was determined by considering the absolute size which should lie between zero and one but can never assume values of zero or one. Multiple Regression analysis was used to determine whether a group of independent variables together predict dependent variable (Perception of Enrolment).

2.5. Model specification
The study regressed the Perception of Enrolment (outcome variable, Y) and the Client Oriented Marketing Strategies (predictor variables, X1, X_2, X_3 and X_4). The regression equation is:

$$Y= \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1+ \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3+ \beta_4X_4+ \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y= Students Perception of Enrolment

ε = Error term

β_1, β_2, β_3, β_4 = Coefficients of Perception of Enrolment

X_1 = Customer value

X_2 = Customer cost

X_3 = Customer convenience

X_4 = Customer communication

3.0. Results and Discussion
3.1. Total Variance Explained on Perception of Enrolment
Factor analyses attempts to cluster items or characteristics that seem to collate highly with each other in defining a particular construct (Mugenda, 2008). Factor analyses are a powerful procedure used to validate hypothetical constructs. The results in table 1, from factor analysis on Perception of Enrolment shows that two components with Eigen values greater than one (1) were extracted, which represented 79.717% of variance in Perception of Enrolment . This means that Perception of Enrolment can be explained by first two components. The "% of variance" column shows how much of the total variability (in all of the variables together) can be accounted for by each of the factors. Factor 1 accounted for 65% of the variability in all variables, and factor 2 accounted for 14 %.

Table 1: Total Variance Explained on Perception of Enrolment

Com	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Var	Cum%	Total	% of Var	Cum %	Total	% of Var	Cum %
1	9.765	65.101	65.101	9.765	65.101	65.101	9.724	64.828	64.828
2	2.192	14.616	79.717	2.192	14.616	79.717	2.233	14.889	79.717
3	.889	5.924	85.641						
4	.742	4.945	90.586						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Source: Survey Data 2011

3.2. Total Variance Explained on Customer Value

The results in table 2, from factor extraction on Customer Value(CV) shows that three components with Eigen values greater than one were extracted, which represented 91.928% of variance in CV. The relative importance of three factors is equalized for this data.

Table 2 Customer Value Total Variance Explained

Com	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Var	Cum %	Total	% of Var	Cum %	Total	% of Var	Cum %
1	4.663	46.629	46.629	4.663	46.629	46.629	3.977	39.769	39.769
2	3.413	34.129	80.758	3.413	34.129	80.758	3.966	39.663	79.432
3	1.117	11.170	91.928	1.117	11.170	91.928	1.250	12.496	91.928
4	.754	7.545	99.472						
5	.023	.226	99.698						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Source: Survey Data 2011

3.4. Total Variance Explained for Customer Cost on Perception of Enrolment

From results we have just two factors extracted, and that each one accounts for a larger percentage of the variability. The results in table 3, from factor analysis on Customer Cost (CC_1) shows that two components with Eigen values greater than one were extracted, which represented 74% of variance in CC_1. This means that CC_1 can be explained by first two components. The "% of variance" column shows how much of the total variability (in all of the variables together) can be accounted for by each of the factors.

Table 3 Total Variance Explained for Customer Cost on Perception of Enrolment

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.135	45.942	45.942	3.517	39.083	39.083
2	2.480	27.555	73.497	3.097	34.414	73.497
3	.910	10.110	83.607			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Source: Survey Data 2011

3.5. Total Variance Explained for Customer Convenience on Perception of Enrolment

The results in table 4, from factor analysis on Customer Convenience(CC_2) shows that two components with Eigen values greater than one were extracted, which represented 75.608% of variance in CC_2. This means that CC_2 can be explained by first two components. Together, the first two factors explain 75% of the variance in the original data.

3.6. Total Variance Explained for Customer Communication on Perception of Enrolment

The first Eigen value is equal to 3.591 and corresponds to 32% of the variance in the original data. Together, the first four factors explain 63% of the variance in the original data. This is shown on table 5

Table 4 Total Variance Explained for Customer Convenience on Perception of Enrolment

	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Com	Total	% of Var	Cum %	Total	% of Var	Cum %	Total	% of Var	Cum%
1	5.319	53.194	53.194	5.319	53.194	53.194	4.984	49.844	49.844
2	2.241	22.414	75.608	2.241	22.414	75.608	2.576	25.763	75.608
3	.985	9.854	85.461						
4	.736	7.364	92.825						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Survey Data 2011

Table 5: Total Variance Explained for Customer Communication on Perception of Enrolment

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Com	Total	% of Var	Cum %	Total	% of Var	Cum%	Total	% of Var	Cum%
1	3.591	32.645	32.645	3.591	32.645	32.645	2.000	18.178	18.178
2	1.287	11.699	44.343	1.287	11.699	44.343	1.933	17.575	35.753
3	1.112	10.112	54.456	1.112	10.112	54.456	1.567	14.249	50.001
4	1.007	9.158	63.613	1.007	9.158	63.613	1.497	13.612	63.613
5	.855	7.769	71.382						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Survey Data 2011

3.7. Regression Model Summary of COMS and PE

The findings of the study in table 6 revealed R (.741), which is the correlation between the predictors and the outcome. The R^2 value tells us that our model accounts for 55% of variance in the effects of COMS adopted by the university on student's enrolment. From these findings the model generalizes well and it is close to the adjusted. The change statistic tells whether the in R^2 is significant. The significance of an R^2 can be tested by F-ratio. The model causes R^2 to change from zero to .550 and the change is the amount of variance explained and gives rise to an F-ratio 65.313 which is significant with a probability less than .005. Durbin-Watson (DW) statistic informs whether the assumption of independent errors is tenable. As a conservative rule, values less than 1 or greater than 3 should definitely raise an alarm and the closer to 2 the value is, the better. The Durbin-Watson for the study is 2.035, which is close to 2 hence the assumption has been met.

Table:6 Regression Model Summary of COMS on PE

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.741[a]	.550	.541	.56075	.550	65.313	4	214	.000	2.035

a. Predictors: (Constant), customer value, customer cost, customer convenience, Customer communication

b. Dependent Variable: Perception Enrolment

Source: Survey Data 2011

3.8. Regression Coefficients of COMS on PE

From the research, Customer Value and Customer Communication p 0.000 < 0.05 which is significant at 5%, Customer Cost p .021> 0.05 was not significant at 0.05 and Customer Convenience p 0.086 < 0.1 almost significant at 10%. Therefore, it can be inferred that the independent variables; Customer Value, Customer Cost, Customer Convenience, and Customer Communication (4Cs) affects Perception of Enrolment (PE). Hence, the multiple regression equation $Y= \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \varepsilon$, will be given as:

$$Y = 0.438 + .454x_1 - 0.172x_2 + 0.119x_3 + 0.389x_4 + 0.145.$$

This means that for every unit increase in client oriented marketing strategies there will be an effect on the university enrolment by 55% as shown by results in table 7.

Table: 7 Coefficients of COMS on Students PE

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | 95.0% Confidence Interval for B | | Collinearity Statistics | |
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	.438	.145		3.010	.003	.151	.725		
CV	.484	.058	.454	8.350	.000	.370	.598	.711	1.406
CC_1	-.140	.060	-.172	-2.333	.021	-.259	-.022	.385	2.597
CC_2	.111	.064	.119	1.722	.086	-.016	.238	.439	2.280
CC_3	.461	.068	.423	6.753	.000	.327	.596	.537	1.861

a. Dependent Variable: Perception Enrolment

Source: Survey Data 2011

4.0. Recommendations of the Study

4.1. Policy Recommendations

This research found out that Client Oriented Marketing Strategies are good predictors of Perception of Enrolment. Student-centered institutions are, in their everyday life, tangibly different from those institutions that place student welfare second to other goals. The ability of an institution to retain students lies less in the formal programs it devises than in the underlying orientation toward students which it directs its activities. Successful academic schools are distinctive because the responsibility for student enrolment and retention is widely shared by various groups. Indeed, in an era when specialization and fragmentation are commonplace, the lesson from best practice is that student perceptions must be everyone's business in order to create the conditions that encourage and support students to engage in educationally productive PSSP programs. An important way to help students succeed is for institutions to develop policies, make decisions, and create classrooms, programs, curriculum and services that enhance students' perceptions.

The study recommends that in order for institutions to boast enrolments, they should attempt to understand their clients' preferences and reflect them on the marketing policies in their strategic plan(s).

It is recommended that marketers should strive to motivate students to obtain as more information as possible about their academic schools, especially through the internet (institution web site and social media platforms) by making it appealing. It is suggested that, by increasing a direct experience with the product (the institution), the opportunity to process more information increases and leads to a more favourable evaluation. As pointed out by Maringe (2006), communication massages should put accent on issues or information students find very important to them and not issues education institutions think are important to students.

The study recommends that institutions should pay more attention to training and motivation of the staff involved in the enrolment of students because play a critical role to an institution's growth. Students usually speak a lot with these people about their needs. Therefore, it is important for the team to be adequately conversant with the necessary information required by prospective consumers so as to respond to their concerns appropriately.

4.2. Limitations and Areas for Further Research

First, resource constraints made the research to limit the scope of research to five academic schools in Moi University, in Kenya and the sample size was limited to 284 PSSP students. Second, the research field of marketing strategies is still at relatively pioneer stage, hence the study had limited empirical research on marketing strategies in public universities to utillize. Third, this study should be interpreted with some concern as it is directed only to the Client- Oriented Marketing Strategies towards students' Perception of Enrolment. It is important to recognize that there are other variables or constructs that may possibly have an impact on Perception of Enrolment. These variables include things such as student's profile (gender, parental income, previous education etc) that could be studied to better understand Perception of Enrolment. It is anticipated that this will stimulate future research considering the importance of customer satisfaction. A study on the determinants of students' choice of university, other than marketing strategies, could also be investigated.

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