Challenges and Prospects of Social Media on Digital Natives: The Case of Nigeria
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Abstract

This study examined the Challenges and Prospects of Social Media on Digital Natives in South-South Region of Nigeria. In other words, it set out to assess the challenges and the likely prospects that the social media holds for the class of young people described as digital natives by some erudite scholars. They were so described because they were viewed to have grew up using technological artifacts in every sphere of their living including learning. Therefore, the study adopted the survey method. The population consisted the 716 fresh undergraduate students of department of electrical/electronic of three selected Universities in the South-South region of Nigeria namely Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun covering Edo/Delta; University of Port Harcourt covering Rivers/Bayelsa and University of Uyo covering Cross River/Akwa-Ibom States. The study further adopted a sample size of 251 respondents from the population through the use of the National Statistical Service Size Calculator of Australia. Thus 251 copies of questionnaire were administered and returned. The data gathered were analyzed using the simple percentages and based on the 5-point Likert scale. The study revealed that the digital natives are actually very much knowledgeable and aware of the social media platform and it has also some harrowing effect on them which of course have become daunting challenges to their development. The study further revealed that despite the horrendous challenges articulated, social media portends some prospects that could be harnessed to change the shape of society and the way businesses are done. The study did not fail to draw some line of conclusions from the findings as a light to drafting some salient recommendations. It graciously recommended that there was need for attitude re-orientation for the digital natives to reduce social media addiction. However, again, it recommended that educational institutions convert such addictions to designing educational software that could engage the young people and make them relevant acquiring new skills and becoming efficient in a multi-task environment. It recommended that policy makers make use of the social media to create health and safety orientation as well as entrepreneurship and wealth creation for the young people. In addition, it recommended the expansion of the innovative approach of the social media in promoting e-commerce and e-business transactions as a way of creating a more efficient and functional society.

Keywords: **digital natives, social media, digital immigrants, Nigeria, digital evolution**

Introduction

Social Media has indeed; become a trending lexicon in media study such that many researchers have turned towards investigating and evaluating its impact and effect on society lately. This is so as several decades saw the dominance of the conventional (traditional) media in society especially in exercising the responsibility of information, education and entertainment. But with the turn of events in the new century, the evolution of technology and the ubiquitous power of the information and communication technology (ICT) which has converged the world so much so that Marshall McLuhan's(1962) global village philosophy was no longer a mere expression but a startling reality.This position has become too obvious that Kaplan and Haenlein (2001, p.60) note that the current trend toward social media can therefore be seen as an evolution back to the internet's root, since it re-transforms the World Wide Web to what it was initially created for: a platform to facilitate information exchange between users.

Many scholars have argued that much as the social media have provided a plethora of opportunities for transforming societies and the advancement of humanity through interactive information exchange, it has also created catalogue of challenges that the society is presently contending with. However, the basic reality is that this new media platform has also created new followership which Prensky (2001) describes as digital natives and digital immigrants. According to him, the digital natives represent the first generation to grow up with the digital technology of the 21st century and spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital musical players, video-cams, cell phones and all other toys and tools of the digital age, whereas the digital immigrants are those struggling to adapt the new digital technology such as turning to the internet for information in second tier manner rather than first.

So, this digital evolution has brought about creation of several social media platform for interactions such that "this generational dynamism in communication tools and systems has resulted in outstanding evolution of a collaborative, participatory, democratic and user-generated-content pattern of communication." (Odii, 2013). From the forgoing, this study tends to analyse the challenges and prospects inherent in the use of social media by the digital natives, whose language has been altered by digital revolution.No wonder Prensky (2001) emphasizes that "they have been adjusting or programming their brains to the speed, interactivity, and other factors in the games, much as boomers' brains were programmed to accommodate television, and literate man's brains were programmed to deal with the invention of written language and reading, where the brain had to be retrained to deal with things in a highly linear way." However, Greenfield (1984), Graesser and Person (1994) observed that children raised with the computer think differently from the rest of us as they develop hypertext minds and it is as though their cognitive structures were parallel, not sequential. Again, Graesser and

Person (1994) further argued that the linear thought process that dominate educational systems now can actually retard learning for brains developed through game and web-surfing process on computer. But Prensky (2001) would want to argue differently that this digital natives have short attention span – for the old ways of learning; as their attention spans are not short for games … or for anything else that actually interests them and as a result of their experiences digital natives crave interactivity – an immediate response to their each and every action. It is obvious that such characteristics described by Prensky are prevalent in the attitude and behavior of young people in the South-South region of Nigeria. Though, by their presumed knowledge of the digital technologies that provides platform for the social media, they are invariably classified as digital natives in this context, however, their level of knowledge and applicability of these technologies may be dwarfed and so become digital immigrants when compared to other advanced climes where these technologies have gone beyond what is obtainable in developing countries like Nigeria today.

In summary, Odii (2013, pp.172-173) captured both the challenges and prospects of social media effects on digital natives thus; "with all its gains like connectivity, interactivity, exclusivity, alertness and all that; the social media have such downsides as ethical disconnect, language pollution, unverifiable reports, disaffection, moral decay, fraud and lack of integrity."If these bombard the digital natives who are addicted to the use of the social media more often than not, then there are real challenges on what kind of citizens the digital natives would be to the society. But the question to unravel also in this research is to know whether the challenges in any form diminishes the prospects (opportunities) of this technologically driven media system or that the challenges are merely raising false alarms.

This is in spite of the touted opportunities that the platform provides in terms of available learning tools to improve on old learning skills.

i).That despite the new line of opportunities opened by the social media in terms of socio-economic, educational and technological advancement, there is the fear that young people (digital natives) are very much distracted by the social media platforms.

ii). There is also the fear of lack of self-control by the young people in the use of social media leading to moral decay, low educational values and unethical behaviours.

To this end this study would examine the issues stated above and respond to them in a bid to finding solution to the problems.

Objectives of the Study

The Objectives of the study are:

i). To ascertain the kind of phone or computer facilities that exert greater influence on use of social media by digital natives

ii). To determine the effect of social media use on the digital natives

iii). To examine the extent of benefit of social media to digital natives.. Literature Review

Literature Review

Most scholars have categorized this form of media under the new media. According to the Fordham University Graduate School of Business (cited in Adedina, Adeniyi and Bolaji, 2008) the new media as consisting of media and communication activities made possible by the digital revolution and distinguished from traditional mass media. Nwabueze (2015, pp.146-147) concur that the new media are ICT-based media which have enhanced the performance and widened the horizon of the traditional mass media.

For Hanson (2005, p.280), new media is professionally produced online media that don't have traditional broadcast or print component. He further elucidated that the new media "are often referred to as dot-coms. Most significant are the independent sites such as zines, weblogs, webcams, and gossip pages – that are operated by anyone who wants to be a publisher and has a website."

In other words, the above views were attempting descriptive analyses of the meaning of social media within the ambit of the new media. This is further buttressed by a fundamental contribution of McQuail (2006, p.38) that the main features which distinguished the new media from the 'old' media are their interconnectedness, their accessibility to individual users as senders and/or receivers, their interactivity, their multiplicity of use and open ended character and their ubiquity and *'delocatedness'*. Mugira (2009) seems to agree by noting that the new media comprise the latest forms of digital mass communication such as textual blogs, videoblogs, wikis and podcasts which are competing with radio, television and newspapers. However, the working definition of the concept of the new media adopted in this paper is as it relates to social media and digital natives.

Digital Natives

The argument for a Net Generation of Digital Natives has a strong educational component which suggests that the new generation of learners will be pre-conditioned by their use of technology to drive changes in pedagogy and that these changes will include

aspects of collaboration, particularly team work and peer-to-peer learning (Oblinger and Oblinger, 2005, p.7). To this end, Palfery and Gasser (2008) argue that access to new technology is not a given and that it depends on a learned digital literacy. This argument, according to Jones and Shao (2011, p.11), clearly leaves a lot to be desired. They elaborated that from a generation who are born digital, because they grew up in a world infused with new technology, they have moved to a sub-group, a population who depend on access to technology which is itself conditioned by a digital literacy that can only be acquired through some form of formal or informal learning.

In addition to the raging argument, Bullen et al (2008); Bullen, Morgan, Belfer and Qayyun (2009); Bullen et al (2011) have observed that students communication preferences were not simply age or generation related. They noted that net generation students otherwise known as digital natives were only as comfortable in using computers, internet and other technologies for a variety of purposes as non-net generation (digital immigrant) students.

Importantly, in a recent study, Kennedy et al (2010) again provided empirical-base evidence that contradicted the claims made about digital natives being a homogenous and highly skilled group of young people with respect to information and communication technology. They found that there was a widespread diversity in students' access to skill levels and use of technologies. Incidentally, Waycott et al (2009) reported in another study ran counter to the assumptions made about the 'digital divide' between the more technological adept digital native students and their less savvy digital immigrant teachers and colleagues. Thinyane (2010) research report again, contrary to Prensky's digital natives claim (2001a, 2001b, 2010) portrayed a heterogeneous student population, with varied levels of access to most of the technologies. The report further noted that students' use of web 2.0 technologies, which Prensky claimed to be a key feature of digital natives, didn't appear to be actively used by students in their daily lives nor in their studies.

Methodology

The research method adopted for this study is the survey research design. This was to enable the researcher to examine certain variables and their interrelationships and then develop explanatory influences. The population of the study comprised 716 first year Electrical/Electronic Engineering students of three Universities selected randomly in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria which has six states of the federation namely, Edo, Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa-Ibom and Cross River. A cumulative sum of the population therefore is 716. The sample size was further reduced to 251 through the use of the National Statistical Service Size Calculator of Australia. The choice of the first year students (from electrical & electronic department) for this study was necessitated by the fact that they were admitted through Computer Based Test and had working

knowledge of computer applications, therefore, could favourably fall within Prensky (2001) description of digital natives, meaning those who are comfortably adaptable to the use of technologies for their daily activities including learning. So, as the trend of adopting technological facilities by many educational institutions due to the assumption that students these days are computer compliant, the findings from a study of the challenges and opportunities of social media on digital natives in South South zone can fairly be generalized as the behavourial pattern of students within such categorization as digital natives in Nigeria at large.

The data for the study were gathered through the questionnaire. All the questions were close-ended to make for easy and precise coding, computation and interpretation of findings. Most of the questions were constructed based on 5-point Likert scale with the following weighting: SA=5; A = 4; U= 3; D = 2 and SD = 1. Some questions demanded "yes" or "no" answer. Simple percentage was used to analyse the data. The formula used for computation of data is the simple percentages

R x 100 where R = Number of Response; N = Total Number of Respondents

N

The formula for computations based on 5-point Likert scale was AR x W
R x NQ

Where AR = Aggregate Response; W= Weighting; R= Number of Response;
N=Total Number of respondents; NQ= Number of Question.

Findings and discussion

Table I: knowledge and awareness of social media platforms based on facilities

Category	The kind of Phone or Computer Facilities exert greater influence on the use of Social media	
	No	%
Strongly Agree	106	42
Agree	140	56
Undecided	0	0
Disagree	5	2
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	251	

ARxW=1100 =4.38;
RxNQ   251

From Table 1 out of 251 respondents, 246 representing 98% agreed that the kind of phone or computer facility exert greater influence on the use of the social media platform by the digital natives which also increased their level of knowledge and awareness of the social media platform, so students with sophisticated phones and laptop computers with internet connectivity more often than not utilize social media platform. Only 2%, that is, 5 respondents disagreed. Thus the computed figure based on 5-point Likert scale was 4.38.

Table 2: Effect of Social Media on Users

Category	Effect of Social Media on Users					
	2(i) Social Media Leads to too much information about the user		2(ii) Many Socia Media Users believe information on the Platform before verifying		2(iii) Social Media users are often exposed to Pornography & get attracted	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Strongly Agree	73	30	0	0	16	6
Agree	145	58	11	4	205	82
Undecided	31	12	0	0	0	0
Disagree	0	0	240	96	30	12
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	251	100	251	100	251	100

$$\frac{1048}{251} = 4.18 \qquad \frac{775}{251} = 3.09$$

$$\frac{960}{251} = 3.8$$

Table 2 has three items dispensed under it. It shows that out of the 251 respondents on 2 (i) 220 respondents representing 88% agreed that the social media leads to exposing too much information about the user, which of course invades the privacy of the individual user and result in negative effective. While 31 respondents representing 12% was undecided. Therefore, the computed figure based on 5-point Likert scale was 4.18. Also, table 2(ii) it shows that of the 251 respondents, 11 representing 4% agreed that many social media users believe in information supplied on the platform before verifying, whereas 240 of the respondents representing 96% disagreed with the notion as they claim that most of the information is untrue. Thus the computed figure based on 5-point Likert scale was 3.09. Again, on table 2 (iii) out of the 251 respondents, 221(88%) agreed that social media users are often exposed to pornography and are attracted by them; while 30

respondents representing 12% disagreed. Therefore, the computed figure based on 5-point Likert scale was 3.8.

Table 3: Extent of benefits to the Digital Natives of the Use of Social Media

Category	Extent of Benefit to Digital Natives					
	3(i) Students Frequently Use Social media for Educational Goals		3(ii)Social Media affects social networking & interaction		3 (iii) Social Media affects job hunt via advert circulation via group	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Strongly Agree	35	14	175	70	130	52
Agree	181	72	75	29.8	121	48
Undecided	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disagree	35	14	0	0	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0	1	0.2	0	0
Total	251	100	251	100	251	100

$$\frac{969}{251} = 3.9 \qquad \frac{1176}{251} = 4.7 \qquad \frac{1134}{251} = 4.51$$

To also determine the extent of benefit to the digital natives on the use of the social media another three sub-set questions on the 5-point Likert scale was further provided on Table 3. Out of the 251 respondents, 216 respondents representing 86% agreed that the use of social media is to promote educational goals of the users, whereas 35 respondents representing 14% disagreed. Thus the computed figure based on 5-point Likert scale was 3.9. In same table 3(ii) out of 251 respondents, an overwhelming 250 respondents, representing 99.8% agreed that social media affects social networking and interactions as the platform is a convergent community of social interactors. Only 1 respondent representing 0.2% disagreed. The computed figure based on 5-point Likert was 4.7. Finally, on table 3(iii), out of the 251 respondents, the entire respondents (251) representing 100% agreed that social media promotes job search and hunt through advert circulation on the platform and groupings on the platform. Thus the computed figure based on 5-point Likert scale was 4.51.

Discussion of Findings

Part of the findings in this research indicates that the sophistication of the phone or computer facilities have also tended to make young adults become much aware and knowledgeable in the use of the social media as seen from the 5-point Likert scale analysis in table 1, where out of 251 respondents, 246 representing 98% agreed that the kind of phone or computer facility exert greater influence on the use of the social media platform by the digital natives which also increased their level of knowledge and awareness of the social media platform. Moreover since the computed value in t-table 2a was 4.38, which is above the mean weight (3.0), it implies that the digital natives have high level of awareness and knowledge of the social media platforms.

Also , Table 2(ii) reveals that of the 251 respondents, 190 representing 76% said constant chatting on social media platform has affected their language writing skills leading to the use of abbreviations in serious writings, while 61 (24%) said it has not affected their language writing skills. Selwyn (2008) found that academic-related information searching was a prominent but not a predominant of student's daily engagement with the internet. Selwyn (2009) later conducted an in-depth qualitative analysis of 909 UK undergraduate students' Facebook posting activities and concluded that students' use of social networking sites such as Facebook had become important for students' social and cultural approach to being a student rather than necessarily enhancing their formal studies. Table 2(iii), 221 respondents, that is, 88% agreed that social media exposed them to pornography and they get attracted to it while 30 representing 12% disagreed. Therefore, since the computed value in t-table 2(iii) was 3.8, which is above the mean weight (3.0), it implies that the digital natives have high risk of being exposed to pornography and getting attracted to them on the social media platforms.. According to Idoko (2016), instead of increasing productivity, social media (networking) is a big distraction to adolescent lives today. He explicated further that one devastating example of how adolescents are distracted by social networking is with using cell phones while driving, young people are always on their phones, looking at social media sites and connecting with others. He also emphasized that adolescents use their phones while they are sitting in class, at work, walking to class, or even while they are shopping. "Basically, you will find young people on their phone anywhere and everywhere", he concluded.

As earlier asserted under literature review in this study, the challenges of social media on digital natives are apparently numerous. Bullen et al (2008); Bullen, Morgan, Belfer and Qayyun (2009); Bullen et al (2011) have observed that students communication preferences were not simply age or generation related. They noted that net generation students otherwise known as digital natives were only as comfortable in using computers, internet and other technologies for a variety of purposes as non-net generation (digital immigrant) students. Jones and Shao (2011) noted that though there was a considerable

growth in university students' access to a range of computing technologies and online technological tools, in some context their use of technologies was mainly for social and entertainment purposes, but not for learning. This assertion tends to correlate with the findings on the respondents reading concentration and language writing skills which has negatively been affected by their volume of time allocated to chatting and browsing on the social media platform. Due to their preferences on engaging in interactions on these social sites, they have also become vulnerable to social network pornographic attacks and people of their age still at the adolescent, they are bound to be attracted. This was the case of Cynthia Osokogu, a post-graduate student of Nasarawa State University, Keffi, who was murdered by her facebook friends in a hotel in Lagos. According to Vanguard report, investigations revealed that Cynthia was murdered by her facebook acquaintances who lured her to a hotel in Lagos, drugged and strangulated her to death. This brings us to the fundamental aspect of the theoretical benchmark for this study. Social Presence Theory which states that media differ in the degree of "social presence" – defined as acoustic, visual and physical contact that can be achieved. The higher the social presence, the larger the social influence that the communication partners have on each other's behaviour.

Table 2(i) indicates that the knowledge and application of social media leads to too much disclosure of personal information on the platforms. This is because out of the 251 respondents, 220 representing 88% agreed that they disclosed their personal information on social media platforms, whereas 31, that is, 13% were actually undecided. Moreover since the computed value in t-table 2b (i) was 4.18, which is above the mean weight (3.0), it implies that the knowledge of the digital natives of the various social media platforms have negative effect on the way they react or treat information and therefore pose challenges to them. According to Monye (2015,p.26), young people are more likely to share too much information over social networking. This allows for them to be more susceptible to cyber bullying, 'sexting' and internet addiction/depression. He concluded by saying that everything is shared on social networking site, rather than through face-to-face contact, and people forget that they are talking to an actual person on the other side of the site.

Meanwhile the entire 251 respondents, in table 3(iii) that is, 100% agreed that Social Media enhances job hunt through advert circulation and search. Moreover, since the computed t-table 2c(iii) was 4.51 which is above the mean weight (3.0), it implies that the digital natives use of the social media could be beneficial as it has the prospects of promoting job hunt through adequate information via group interactions and circulation of such information on the platforms. A critical enquiry on Table 1c(iii) indicates that 205 (82%) was vehemently against scrapping of Social Media while same number said they have never engaged in e-dating.

Table 3(i) asserts that 216 representing 86% of the respondents agreed that they adopt the social media to support their educational goals, 35(14%) disagreed. Therefore, since the computed value in t-table 2c (i) was 3.9, which is above the mean weight (3.0), it implies that the knowledge and application by the digital natives of the various social media platforms helps them in supporting their educational goals in some way. That is to say, the broad and quality of the platform could enhance learning, business development, socio-economic advancement as well as technological growth. This align with the Media richness theory as enunciated earlier in this study. The theory states that media differ in the degree of richness they possess – that is, the amount of information they allow to be transmitted in a given time interval – and that therefore some media are more effective than others in resolving ambiguity and uncertainty, a role that the social media is now effectively and satisfactorily performing for the digital natives.

Summary of Findings

The findings from this study are summarized as follows:

i). It was obvious that peer influence affects the young generation who are also referred to as digital natives in adapting to the use of social media. This became the major avenue of their getting to know and be aware of the social media platforms.

Challenges

i). The study also found that there is so much self-disclosure by digital natives on social media platform. This tends to agree with the theoretical frame for this study which elevated the argument of self-presentation and self-disclosure as higher than collaborative projects, with the latter focusing more on specific content domains. In a similar spirit, social networking sites allow for more self-disclosure than content communities. This has, indeed, caused the digital natives some pains just as reflected in the case of Cynthia Osokogu cited above and many more that has been victims of either cyber bullying or scam. Supporting this finding, Odii (2013, p168) notes that social media users are people who have multiple identities. According to him, they adopt very different personalities, confident in the knowledge that no one knows their real identity. This implies that such characters use pseudo names to cause unprintable havoc online.

ii). The study also found that the digital natives are social media addictives, giving more than 20% of their daily time schedule to chatting or browsing on social media platform. This has made many of them vulnerably exposed to sexting and pornographic contents which they get attracted to.

iii). The allocation of over 20% of their time schedule, as the study found out make their academic to suffer some set-backs as well as affect their language writing skills. For instance many of the young adolescent who incidentally are in the student-group used for this study reveals that in writing very crucial scripts or documents, they make use of such

terms as '*pls*' in place of please, *lol* instead of Laugh out loud, '*b4*' (before), dat (that), '*n*'(and), *BRB* (be right back), HBD (happy birthday), LLNP (Long life and prosperity) and many more. Such abbreviations have cost them serious set-backs in examinations.

iv). the study also discovered that network failure hinders smooth access and use of the social media platforms. This apparently could be linked to poor power and other social infrastructures that could support the effectiveness and efficiency of technological applications that aid the social media platforms.

v). The study also found that the digital natives are challenged by unethical engagements on social media as well as constant confrontation with unverified reports and commentaries that are misleading.

Prospects

However, the study also found that despite the multifarious challenges enumerated above, the social media possesses diverse prospects for the digital natives to tap from on the platform of changing technological advancement.

i). The study identified the new wave of e-commerce and e-business transactions. This supports the argument that interactivity of the social media has assisted in revolutionizing the business environment. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p.67) today, everything is about social media. Some industry gurus claim that if you do not participate in Facebook, YouTube, and Second Life, you are not part of cyber space anymore. Social media allow firms to engage in timely and direct end-consumer contact at relatively low cost and higher levels of efficiency than can be achieved with more traditional communication tools.

ii). The study also found that the social media provide an unlimited gateway to educational advancement with available tools as well as promote science and technological growth. It was discovered from the study that almost all the respondents have one form of gadgets or the other that promotes the use of social media platform. For instance, Tapscott (200) identified the internet as the ultimate interactive environment and argued that education needed to move from what he described as a teacher-centred approach to learning, to a learner-centred approach. In order words, technology has become a major tool in driving modern learning and education.

iii). The study further identified that greater opportunities lie on the use of social media to deliver health and safety tips to users. Several content on the social media platform disseminate information on health guide and safety measures such that users become aware of some of the issues through their interactions.

v). It was also found from the study that majority of the digital natives turn to the social media platform to get job information circulated within their groups and those that they

29

incidentally come across in other social media platform. The respondents believe that social media definitely is a new approach to obtaining the best of information to be gainfully employed.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn. Firstly, the study concludes that the youths are in the habit of giving to self-disclosure on social media platforms that are detrimental to them. Instances abound that such disclosure has resulted even in loss of lives and caused lots of emotional distress as well as perpetration of scam and bullying on cyber space.

But again, the study concludes that in spite of the challenges that bedevil the use of social media by the digital natives, there are greater prospects. It has become a platform for young people to obtain job information and seek for better career opportunities. This then establishes the importance of social presence and media richness theory to this work.

Recommendations

Arising from the findings of this study, the following recommendations were put forward:

- Moral Instructors/Guidance Counsellors can also engage in designing moral lessons and behavourial correctness by creating specialized blogs that can constantly checkmate the young people's engagement and being attracted to negative post and interactions on social media platforms.

- Government can as a matter of policy direct platform administrator to put space-control or checkmate to ensure that ambiguous post and unwanted post and blogs are disallowed in the various platforms.

- The policy makers can also convert the addiction of the young people to advantage by designing and creating entrepreneurship and wealth development programmes online that could engage them, for instance the NairaBet site has presently engaged many young Nigerians as it is attached to football forecast and empowering them with cash rewards for any win. But more importantly, an expansion of online marketing with the social media platform could be more apt in a socio-economic changing environment where the world has become more of a global community.

- Government should further harness the interactive opportunities inherent on social media to expand the scope of e-commerce and e-business transact especially to sustain the cashless economy and to enable it drive an innovative economic transformation.

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