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Role Of Media In Promoting Tourism Through Sports In Pakistan

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Abstract

Pakistan enjoys weather conditions which are considered appropriate for both sport and tourism. With its diverse landscapes and historical cultural heritage, there are countless opportunities for sports enthusiasts and adventurers from all around the world. Media is vital to creating and marketing sports tourism in Pakistan. By showcasing the beauty of Pakistan's natural landscapes, historical heritage and places, and diverse culture through various media platforms, the country can easily attract a global audience of sports fans. For instance, coverage of sporting events, such as cricket matches, polo tournaments, and jeep rallies, provides a unique glimpse into the country's vibrant sporting culture and natural beauty. Through attractive visuals and compelling narratives, the media has the ability to effectively highlight Pakistan as a desirable sports tourism destination. Consequently, the arrival of tourists will increase, and economic development will be promoted. Therefore, this research focuses on role of media in promoting tourism through sports in Pakistan. This study uses qualitative research technique i.e., interview method. Sample size of 20 respondents has been drawn by using purposive sampling technique comprising of sports journalists, and economic stake holders. Additionally, thematic analysis was applied to further analyze data collected on the basis of themes and sub-themes.

Keywords: *Sports, Tourism, Media, National economy, National-image building.*

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Introduction

Sport tourism is a relatively young and quickly expanding segment of the tourist business that focuses on the target planning of developing countries. Furthermore, it is anticipated that athletic tourism would alter the social and economic fabric of both urban and rural areas. By attracting visitors and stimulating local economies, sport tourism seems to have the ability to improve people's quality of life (Homafar, Honari, Heidary, Heidary, & Emami, 2011).

Sport tourism is described as a brief departure from one's place of residence for the purpose of passing the time while engaging in activities such as plying or watching games and sports. Nowadays, major economic activities in both developed and developing countries are related to sport and tourism (Swart & Bob, 2007).

According to studies, the most developed segment of the tourism industry is sport tourism (Kasimati & Dawson, 2009). For the people living in the hosting region, tourists are the main source of employment and income (Batyk & Ski, 2009).

Global metropolises view the Olympic Games as a special opportunity for local marketing. This because hosting a major sporting event draws large crowds of spectators and tourists to the host city/country, which subsequently has a positive economic impact (Preuss, Benoit, Norm, & Reilly, 2007).

The degree of local development, the volume of visitors, the size of the community, the growth of tourism, and the capacity to forge a distinctive local sporting identity among locals and visitors all influence how sustainable sport tourism is. This implies that tourist-sport destinations have more opportunities to improve their sustainable development by appropriately addressing the caliber of the structures, infrastructure, and services they offer, the more well-known and advanced they are (Chersulich Tomino, Perić, & Wise , 2020).

Sport tourism is a component of a larger discussion that revolves around two ideas: sustainable development and sustainability. First, as has been discussed in the literature since the 1990s, sustainability is meant to serve as a strategic lever for the development of sustainable sport tourism (Schlemmer, Barth, & Schnitzer, 2020).

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Because of its effects on the social, cultural, and economic spheres of the host countries, sports tourism is one of the tourism industry's fastest-growing market segments and is receiving more attention. Mega sports events or international competitions are regarded as a privilege for developing nations, and since 2008, these nations have hosted these kinds of events with success. Numerous academic works have demonstrated that the primary economic advantage derived from large-scale sporting events for the host nation is attributed to the consumption of tourists and other visitors during the events, as well as the rise in tourist arrivals both prior to and following the event. Large-scale sporting events may also be a primary factor in the long-term upward trend in travel demand. Positive changes in the supply can also be used to gauge positive shifts. The production of goods and services, which has been characterized by the numerous benefits of economies of scale, was partially subsidized by tourist demand (Idrees, Bibi, Naveed, & Khan, 2021).

A few crucial elements are involved in what makes a place appealing for sports tourism. First, first-rate athletic facilities. The amenities that a sports tourism destination provides to event organizers and rights holders are the only criteria that matter. A destination's ability to attract spectators and athletes will also depend on the kinds of sporting events it hosts. Simple accessibility is also crucial; it's critical to make sure you can get to locations quickly and safely. Not to be overlooked are lodgings worthy of champions, a secure atmosphere, and a thriving tourism sector with a wealth of entertainment and cultural offerings (Decker, 2023).

Some believe that sports tourism combined with an annual program that includes multiple events is a useful tool for stimulating the local economy in small cities because of the positive effects that these programs are believed to have on local economies. Sports tourism is becoming more and more popular as a tool to promote local economic development around the world. According to certain studies, amateur athletic events can provide host communities with large economic returns (Brewer & Freeman, 2015).

Tourism refers to the collection of enterprises, services, and endeavours that provide a travel experience. All visitors, whether travelling alone or in groups, will be provided with boarding, accommodation, food, entertainment, business activities, and other hospitality services throughout their stay (Asdullah, Ahmad, & Parveen, 2015).

Travels made specifically to watch sporting events, such as professional football leagues, rugby and cricket matches, the Olympics, and auto races, are referred to as sports tourism. Sports tourism includes mountain biking, polo festivals, rock climbing, water rafting, and many other activities (Asdullah, Ahmad, & Parveen, 2015).

Pakistan is well-known worldwide for its world-class cuisine, historical sites, friendly people, and fascinating cities. The majority of foreign states, however, are unaware of how great it is as a place to experience both cultural events and daring sports. Pakistan offers a huge selection of adventure sports. Pakistan offers a plethora of exciting locations for extracurricular travel that anyone can visit. Pakistan is endowed with such vibrant geographical landscapes that it makes an outstanding tourist destination, offering activities ranging from fishing to river rafting, skiing to camping, and jeep safari to mountaineering (Fakhar-e-Alam, 2021).

According to the World tourism and Tourism Council, Pakistan is emerging as one of the world's most appealing tourism destinations. According to the World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2017, the travel industry contributed 328.3 million US dollars to Pakistan's GDP in 2015, increased to 7.6 billion US dollars in 2016, accounting for 2.8% of the country's GDP, and is expected to grow at an average annual rate of 5.9% in 2017, creating 3,894,000 jobs. Pakistan is one of the top ten tourism destinations in the world, according to Forb's Magazine (2018). The tourism industry is expanding at a notable rate, and social media is proving to be an extremely effective tool for marketing and publicity within the sector (Aftab & Khan, 2019).

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For the next five years, it is expected that the sports tourism function market will grow at a rate of about 6% per year. More often sports tourists are categorized based on the sports they participate in. Supporters of cricket and rugby tend to be older and have more money to spend. Athletics fans are typically young, frugal individuals, whereas F1 Grand Prix spectators are more likely to be men in their forties with higher-than-average disposable income (Krammer, 2005).

In Pakistan cricket is the main sport that has the potential to expand the country's tourism industry. Another developing sport tourism industry in Pakistan is the Cholistan Desert Jeep Rally, which requires improvement before being promoted further. Kabaddi is a new sports category that is expected to overtake Exodus Sports in the near future. Kabaddi is a predominantly Punjabi sport that is currently played in many other countries. Like all other widely-liked sports in the world, Kabaddi World Champion Tournaments are currently held in Pakistan and are growing in popularity every day (Malik, n.d).

The tourism industry gained prominence a long time ago when people began to pay attention to its potential because of its connection to the global economy. Experiences connected with traveling to far-off locations and nations from one's home or place of origin are included in the category of tourism (Backer & Schänzel, 2013).

One of the main industrial activities of today is tourism, which is also regarded as one of the fundamental economic activities to generate income. Additionally, according to research, 43% of jobs worldwide in 2011 were related to the tourism sector (Safdel, Yektayar, Mohammadi, & Molazem, 2014).

Activities related to tourism are crucial for the growth of an economy. Originally linked to economic expansion, tourism has since evolved to include social development and ecological preservation in an effort to mitigate the negative effects of mass tourism and contribute to destination development strategies (Karimi-Osbouyi, Esfandiari, & AliPour-Nakhi, 2015).

A sporting event always has an effect on the host location, but the effects are more pronounced economically than socially or environmentally. Additionally, sports tourism has been applied as a strategy for regional development (Bob, Arrey, & Swart, 2008).

The tourism industry and the media are closely related, particularly when it comes to promoting tourism. This is because the media plays the role of a mediator when it comes to tourism policy, bringing the two industries together. The media's job is to act as a middleman in the transfer of tourism goods from producers to customers (Nistor & Nedelea, 2018).

Technologies for media communication are essential for early investments in sustainable, internationally integrated tourism development metrics. The major players in local, national, and international tourism can undergo radical behavioral and attitude changes as a result of the potent effects of media communications on peace, security, and sustainable development. The advantages of tourism for the nation's social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental aspects would bring about significant and historic transformations (Kumar, 2014).

Research objectives

This research focuses on the following objectives;

- To find the relationship between media coverage of sports in Pakistan.
- To analyze the role of mainstream media in covering sports to promote tourism in Pakistan.

Research Question

- Does mainstream media in Pakistan cover sports events?
- Does Pakistani mainstream media coverage of sports events attract tourists in Pakistan?

Literature Review

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Research topics about the significance of social media, especially in the tourism industry, are becoming more and more well-known. Social media must be used by the tourism industry to manage information search, promote tourism, make decisions, and offer a common forum for interactions with the carefully chosen customer base. Since the advent of digital technology, social media has expanded the reach of traditional word-of-mouth marketing, which includes friends, family, travel agencies, and magazines. Social media allows travelers to connect with millions of people worldwide, including friends and strangers (Vanlalhriati & Singh, 2019). Without a doubt, the media plays a critical role in shaping visitors' perceptions of the host and the local area (Karroubi, 2011).

The best way to promote a tourist destination is through the use of artistic interpretations, advertising strategies, and the area's natural beauty, skills, and potential. They may contribute to a depressing, unfavorable mindset in the community. To put it another way, the media cultivates, internalizes, and absorbs images that they have created through manipulation and intrusion into people's minds (Mohammadi & Rezaei, 2014).

Like all social phenomena, tourism depends on sufficient hospitality—whether that hospitality is good or bad—to grow in society. Because of their abilities, the media is crucial to the growth or contraction of activities related to this industry. In a society that is carefully and deliberately planned, the media has the power to influence people's opinions. They have the power to change people's perspectives and influence their behavior. In modern, audience-friendly societies, the media are the most potent and influential production tools for ideas, social dimensions, and cultural messengers (Soofi, Khodaparast, & Eisazadeh, 2021).

Media such as radio, television, publications, the internet, and new media, have the ability to direct, guide and suggest people. Additionally, the ability of media to influence opinions can have positive implications on tourism industry (Roig, Martin-Fuentes, & Daries-Ramon, 2017).

Sports tourism development is difficult and complex process. The fact that sports tourism combines the two separate industries, such as, sport and tourism could be the main cause of the complication. Since each area is overseen independently, no one organization is in charge of sports tourism as a whole. To take full advantage of sports tourism opportunities, organizations and specialists in physical education and tourism should work closely together (Deery & Jago, 2005).

Various factors have played a part in the growth of sport tourism. Such as, entertainment and leisure activities. Some of them are related to physical education; while others are related to sports services; tourism factors; facilities and infrastructure; natural resources; information and communication services; welfare facilities; and transportation (Nobakht, Atghia, Amiri, Gharakhani, & Ashrafi, 2014).

Mass media, as information highways and important communication bridges on public opinion, are vital to development of sports. Additionally, media also affect discourse, education, social participation, and the culture of sports in society (Khaledian, Mostafaei, Samadi, & Kia, 2013).

Because sports tourism is so important, managers and planners in the nation's tourism and sports sector should work to grow this industry. The intentional and beneficial interactions that should occur between the various departments, institutions, and organizations that are effective, as well as the beneficiaries in the growth of sports tourism, should also not be disregarded (Moeinfard, 2014).

The media's relationship with sports has a lot of positive aspects. The ability of the media to engage the general public and amuse them with content related to their favorite game on their preferred channel. The public's ability to watch various games and matches on television is a result of television. Only because of the media can sport be made available to a wider audience; viewers, the sick, and those uprooted from their hometown can all benefit from it (Nosheen, Shah, & Raza, 2022).

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Global socio-cultural trends, such as the rise in network business, international integration, the frequency of people moving both physically and virtually, and the development of information and communication technologies, are strongly influenced by tourism. As the scholars noted, "the phenomenon of media consumption of televised games has shaped a more dissimilar sense for sport than in the past," all of that is possible as a result of media influence. Sports and media continue to strive to connect with people as viewers, supporters, and consumers through activities like swimming, dancing, javelin, discus, and archery, among many others. It should come as no surprise that modern sportsmen and fans still find sports to be extremely attractive (Maxwell, 2019).

These days, the media—which includes internet, newspapers, TV, cable, radio, and Android—has a direct impact on sports. It wouldn't be incorrect to argue that sports and the media are interdependent. By the mid-1990s, live sports images were a common sight on both television and the internet. The boundaries of this type of sports distribution have thus far been established by personal processors and data transfer rates. As a result, television is the most significant medium for sports reporting that covers events and provides sports-related information (Babapour, 2020).

In its "cricket-mad" country, Pakistan Super League was welcomed with great enthusiasm when it debuted in 2016. But until the tournament's final match in 2017, which served as the ultimate test to determine whether professional cricket could return to Pakistan, all matches were held in the United Arab Emirates due to security concerns following a terrorist attack in Lahore, Pakistan, in 2009 (Cassilo & Coombs, 2020).

An important factor in the growth and popularity of sports is the mass media. Sports are able to receive more attention and advertising through the mass media (Mwisukha, Muniu, & Chumba, 2013).

The media and sports industries are always reaching out to viewers, fans, and customers. Newspapers, radio, and television all have a significant impact on fostering a favorable public perception of women's sports. The sports spirit among women in society could be encouraged and promoted if the media gave attention to sportswomen and female athletes (Oshani, 2015).

The tool provides a direct and potentially useful means of engaging individuals, expanding their knowledge, and helping them understand the significance of an active lifestyle (Alshamli, Al-Anazi, & Shawqi, 2012).

Media sports programs are increasingly being developed with the corresponding essential qualities at the forefront. First, there is a growing emphasis on spectacularizing. These present opportunities to alter the appearance, texture, and impact, to improve the stimulating element, and to provide a wealth of content for the event. In addition, the Olympics are much more than just a sporting event. Opening ceremonies are increasingly becoming spectaculars that are meticulously tailored for the global TV audience (Saini, 2015).

The public is informed about sporting events by means of media outlets, which also profit financially from doing so. Sports and media have therefore come to have a mutually beneficial relationship. The fusion of sports and media has given rise to a new idea known as "sports media." The focus of sports-related content in Pakistani media discourses is on presenting sports as a form of entertainment in order to draw in as many viewers as possible (Khan, Ghaznavi, & Khan, 2021).

This fusion of sports and media has a significant impact on modern society, bringing about a number of changes. Examining Pakistani media through the lens of a "sports media" reveals that media coverage of sports has evolved into a vehicle for popular culture in Pakistani society. As a result, the inclusion of sports in media content is encouraging a new kind of social order that places more emphasis on the financial success of the major media companies (Khan, Ghaznavi, & Khan, 2021).

Research Methodology

This study uses interview method. Total 20 respondents have been selected through purposive sampling technique. results of the study have been drawn by applying thematic analysis of the recoded data from the respondents. Analysis have based on different themes and sub-themes related to the nature of the study.

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Themes	Sub themes
Mainstream media and sports coverage in Pakistan	• Coverage of sports events • Engaging viewers • Earning revenue • Promoting healthy activities • Symbiotic relationship
Media and tourism in Pakistan	• Covering beautiful destinations • Reporting hospitality facilities • Portraying attractive locations through various media messages e.g. Drama, news, film etc. • Symbiosis of media and tourism
Sports and tourism in Pakistan	• Hosting countries and showcasing beautiful sceneries • Introducing local communities • Engaging sports tourists with other location at hosting place
Media, sports and tourism	• Media coverage of sports events in Pakistan • Promotion of tourism through the coverage of sports events • Host cities and other tourist spots in Pakistan • Image of Pakistan as host of sports events
Sports tourism and economic growth in Pakistan	• Attracting more visitors through media coverage of sports events • Consequent economic growth through sports coverage

Results and discussion

Mainstream media and sports coverage in Pakistan

The media's relationship with sports has a lot of positive aspects. The ability of the media to engage the general public and amuse them with content related to their favorite game on their preferred channel. The public's ability to watch various games and matches on television is thanks to television. When respondents of the study were asked, they opined that sports and media are found in a symbiotic relationship where each benefit from the other. Media covers sports to get more viewership and TRP. There exists a competition among media outlets to get coverage rights of different sports events. Such hustle among media organizations leads to benefits on both sides. Sports get more spectators while media get TRPs. This mutual relation of sports and media has resulted in multi billion revenue contributing local as well as global economic growth. Pakistan is also among sports loving nations. However, global image of Pakistan has perished in terms of security or law and order situation. When it comes to Pakistan's reputation around the world, many factors are in doubt. In the mainstream western media, Pakistan is primarily depicted as a terrorist state that provides terrorists with a safe haven and breeding ground (Fan & Shahani, 2014). Respondents of the survey believe that Pakistan has been struggling due to security concerns created by the prolonged war on terror within Pakistan and neighboring Afghanistan. Like all other sectors sports also underwent similar downfall. Pakistan was deprived of hosting different sports events such as ICC World Cup 2015, Asia Cup and many other events in line. Experts believe that cricket being most popular global sports suffered due to this compromising security situation in Pakistan. however, more recently situation has started to improve. The start of PSL has contributed to this improvement when number of foreign players were convinced to play in Pakistan. similarly, hosting Cholistan car rally also helped a lot to get situation improved. Despite, these events, experts opined that Pakistani mainstream media need to change its perspective and give equal coverage to all types of sports happening in Pakistan so that foreign spectators can be attracted.

Media and tourism in Pakistan

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In 2018, the tourism industry worldwide brought in USD 1.7 trillion in exports, and in 2019, the number of visitors rose by 4% to 1.5 billion (Ahmed, Ahmed, & Abbas, 2022). Tourism is the global economy's largest and fastest-growing trading sector. In addition to generating revenue, tourism contributes to the advancement of a country's culture and civilization. The growing interest in travel for business, leisure, sports, health, religion, culture, and education has led to changes in the tourism industry. The goal of tourism is to improve the local economy and social structure while visiting a location without negatively affecting the locals or the environment (Arshad, 2018). Participants of the study responded that Pakistan's breathtaking peaks, lakes, picturesque valleys, holy sites, magnificent structures, traditional delicacies, dining options, and friendly people are known to people worldwide. Additionally, foreign tourists are aware that a range of tourism destinations offer activities like fishing, hunting, rock climbing, paragliding, and safaris through the desert on camels and vehicles. Pakistan introduced initiatives like "Amazing Pakistan" and "Emerging Pakistan" to enhance its reputation as a travel destination. According to the World Economic Forum's tourism and competitiveness rating, Pakistan is currently ranked 124th. Most of the respondents of the interview expressed their concern regarding role of Pakistani media in promotion of tourism in Pakistan. Pakistan is blessed with beautiful sites and rich with viewable spots media coverage can play integral part in inviting global tourist in Pakistan. For many nations, including Pakistan and Dubai and Switzerland, tourism is the main engine of economic growth. The world's top tourist destinations are located in Pakistan. The country is endowed with an abundance of tourism destinations, encompassing mountains, beaches, deserts, and sites related to religion, culture, archaeology, and forests. A mutually beneficial relation needs to understood by Pakistani media and stakeholders so that naturally blessed country can get most out of it.

Sports tourism in Pakistan

Participants of the interview opined that despite being rich with countless sight full destinations, Pakistan is unable to attract masses of the spectators. The afore mentioned security concerns and poor sports facilities deprive Pakistan from organizing mega sports events. Another major concern in this regard is that mostly sports events are organized in few cities across Pakistan leaving major beautiful destinations untouched. For instance, cricket is major sporting event organized by Pakistan in form of National leagues (PSL) or ICC tournaments, there are no playing facilities such as grounds in beautiful destinations like northern parts of the country. In other cases, security concerns are also key excuse for this negligence. Since there are no sporting events being organized in sight full areas no media reaches there and no tourism promotion is possible. However, Pakistan can provide for other sporting events like skiing, skating and paragliding there is need to facilitate those destination in way that can help organizing related global events of sports. Experts believed that sports tourism is considered an important sector with number of contributions to the host countries.

Media, sports and tourism in Pakistan

With 10% of the world's GDP coming from it, tourism is among the most rapidly growing industry worldwide. It is an essential instrument for producing revenue, facilitating employment, alleviating poverty, acquiring foreign currency, and promoting cultural understanding. It includes a variety of activities such as conveyance, correspondence, lodging, food preparation, amusement, and marketing. The objective of this study is to examine the growth and obstacles encountered by sports tourism in Pakistan. there exists and symbiosis between media and sports and this is further strengthened when added with tourism approach. Respondents of the study viewed that, sport is the mass puller in the form of spectators and sports loving fans. Pakistan is lacking in this regard since limited international sports events are organized. While national level sports are not given coverage by mainstream media in Pakistan depriving sports tourism industry as a whole. Experts also believe that due to the corporate interests of media local sports events remain uncovered. Consequently, no tourists get engaged with the host area leaving negative impression.

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Sports tourism and economic growth in Pakistan

Sport is a prominent global social phenomenon, while tourism is a rapidly expanding economic industry. The nature of sport, whether it in a professional or recreational context, often necessitates travelling to various venues for the purpose of participating and engaging in competition. Significant sporting events such as the Olympics and several World Cups have also transformed into highly sought-after tourism attractions. In Pakistan cricket is the main sport that has the potential to expand the country's tourism industry. Another developing sport tourism industry in Pakistan is the Cholistan Desert Jeep Rally, which requires improvement before being promoted further. Kabaddi is a new sports category that is expected to overtake Exodus Sports in the near future. Kabaddi is a predominantly Punjabi sport that is currently played in many other countries. Like all other widely-liked sports in the world, Kabaddi World Champion Tournaments are currently held in Pakistan and are growing in popularity every day (Malik, n.d). Interviewees think that sports tourism makes up a big chunk of the tourism industry; some sources claim that 25% of all travel is associated with sports globally. Sports tourism encompasses more than just participating in sports and attending events; additional activities include leisure vacation. Additionally, experts said that sports tourism supports the economic goals of SDGs 1 (end poverty in all its manifestations globally) and 8 (promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic development, full and productive employment, and decent work for everyone). Local companies benefit from sports tourism, which generates demand for services like lodging, dining, and transportation. Locals can therefore take advantage of employment and income opportunities. Locals may work as instructors and guides, with higher pay owing to their specialized skills, depending on the sports and experiences. Pakistan being blessed with these opportunities needs to focus on sports tourism as key source of economic growth.

Conclusion

Media coverage positively affects the growth of sports tourism, as does good governance. Government-provided safety and security also contributes to the growth of sports tourism, as the nation's positive international reputation draws more visitors for sporting events held there. This research study demonstrates that all respondents agree that there are limited sports happening in Pakistan and further limited coverage is being given by mainstream media. Additionally, apparent bias is also witnessed among media organizations while covering sports events, leading to a narrow picture of Pakistan with limited opportunities of tourism. Results also reveal that corporate media is more profit oriented and there exits selective sports coverage in Pakistan ignoring smaller sporting events. This indicates that the experts believe that the government should hold more domestic and international sporting events and provide adequate security for athletes and tourists in order to boost Pakistan's sports tourism.

Recommendations

The research results have led to the following suggestions;

- Taking sports to more sight full parts of Pakistan than limiting it to few Urban areas.
- Security assurance should be ensured by the government so that sports event can successfully be organized and covered by mainstream media.
- Media needs to end its sports coverage bias so that world can see other sports like skiing, skating, car rallies, kabaddi etc. and be motivated to visit as spectators.

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