

Corporate reputation's mediation in gen z's job application intentions in west Kalimantan

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of employer attractiveness, social media, and corporate reputation as mediating variables on the job application intentions of Generation Z in West Kalimantan. The population for this research consists of 194 Gen Z respondents from West Kalimantan. The study employs a quantitative approach, collecting data through an online survey using Google Forms. The data is analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the help of the SMARTPLS 4.0 statistical application. Based on the analysis, it is concluded that employer attractiveness does not significantly encourage Generation Z to apply for jobs in West Kalimantan. In contrast, social media effectively boosts their interest in applying. Both employer attractiveness and social media influence corporate reputation, which in turn encourages Generation Z to apply for jobs. Additionally, a strong reputation enhances the effects of employer attractiveness and social media in attracting applicants.

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1. Introduction

Currently, companies are engaged in a "war for talent", necessitating the ability to attract and retain top employees for a competitive edge. Unfortunately, many organizations fail to recognize and reward outstanding employees. Therefore, it is crucial for companies to develop strategies to attract, retain, and nurture their best talent (Santiago, 2019).

The workforce is a company's most valuable resource, making it essential for employers to recruit the best talent available (Sadeghvaziri, F., & Azimi, 2022). Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, has grown up in the digital era (Septiawan & Masrunik, 2020) and places a high value on principles that matter to them. Organizations often face challenges in engaging with Gen Z due to differing work perspectives, expectations, and preferences. To attract high-quality candidates, companies must create strategies that foster connections during the job application process, including understanding what potential employees expect from a job (Garnasih, 2024).

The entry of Generation Z into the job market signifies a shift in workforce dynamics. It is vital for companies to understand the needs, preferences, and motivational factors that influence Generation Z in their job search, as this generation will become the future leaders (Fadilah & Putranto, 2023). Currently, Generation Z makes up 27.94% of Indonesia's population (BPS). This generation, often referred to as digital natives or the i-Generation, has grown up alongside rapid technological advancements (Phalevi & Handoyo, 2023). Consequently, Generation Z has become a primary target in the ongoing talent war (Vondrea & Riza, 2024). Corporate branding through social media plays a crucial role in shaping Generation Z's perception of a company by influencing how they view its attributes, benefits, values, culture, personality, and users. Among

these, the most enduring aspects are values, culture, and personality. Additionally, content that highlights sustainability, diversity, inclusivity, and social issues resonates strongly with Generation Z, as they are drawn to brands that align with their personal values.

According to McCrindle (2014), they are "globally focused" because they are the first generation to grow up in an era of globalization and cultural diversity. They have connections with people from various backgrounds, ethnicities, and situations through social media. This suggests that they will change jobs more frequently than previous generations if they do not like them (Csiszárík-Kocsír & Garia-Fodor., 2018). Gen Z also expects seamless digital experiences and transparency, favoring companies that communicate openly and engage meaningfully on social media.

The effectiveness of job seekers' intentions to apply for positions is closely linked to employer appeal. "Employer attractiveness" describes the aspirations and expectations prospective employees have regarding organizations they consider for employment (Annisa et al., 2022). In the technology and digital sectors, companies must compete fiercely to attract quality personnel (Widianti & & Murti, 2020). Employee perceptions of a company's attractiveness are reflected in their inclination to apply for positions (Saini, G. K. & Jawahar, 2019). Therefore, employers need to identify the factors influencing employer attractiveness and understand their overall impact (Ahamad et al., 2023).

Growing up in a technologically advanced world, Generation Z often turns to social media when deciding which jobs to apply for. Businesses leverage social media to market their brands and attract potential employees (Rani et al., 2022). Social media posts that share insights and advice significantly impact an organization's appeal to prospective employees (Annisa et al., 2022). Awareness of a corporate's online reputation has prompted organizations to advise employees on using social media cautiously to protect the corporate image (Schaarschmidt & Walsh, 2020). Businesses can accomplish their objectives through communication activities, such as advertising in printed and electronic media (Afifah et al., 2022).

A corporate's reputation is a key factor influencing job seekers' interest in applying. Research by (Erlinda & Safitri, 2020) shows that candidates have a high interest in job openings, and a strong corporate reputation positively impacts this interest. Damage to a corporate's reputation can hinder its value growth, as reputation is a crucial component of intangible assets (Wang et al., 2024). Building a company's reputation requires a long-term approach, focusing not only on consumers but also on stakeholders (Widyadmono & Harsono, 2019).

The intention to apply for a job involves a process where individuals seek job vacancy information, make decisions, and choose which companies to apply to. The generational shift is an intriguing area of research, especially as Generation Z begins to enter the workforce (Lestari & Manggiasih, 2023). Job seekers' desire to apply can be observed through the companies they frequently research. The intention to apply refers to the decision made by applicants to choose a specific company as their desired workplace (Vondrea & Riza, 2024).

Research indicates that interest in applying for jobs is influenced by employer attractiveness (Buitek et al., 2023), social media (Hanu et al., 2021), and company reputation (Sobriyah., 2021). Employer appeal enhances reputation (Babikova & Bucek, 2019), and social media plays a significant role in shaping it (Suárez et al., 2020). However, some studies suggest that reputation does not always drive applications, possibly due to a lack of recognition or appreciation (Febrianti & Hendratmoko, 2022; Alifa & & Sarasi, 2023) Ultimately, employer attractiveness and social media can boost job interest by enhancing company reputation (Rosari, 2023; Indra & Widodoatmodjo, 2021).

2. Research Method

This study employs a quantitative method by collecting primary data that meets specific criteria. Data collection was conducted through the distribution of Google Form questionnaires. The population of Gen Z in West Kalimantan serves as the subject of this research. The sample size was calculated using the Lemeshow formula ($n = \frac{z^2 P (1-P)}{d^2}$), as the total population is unknown, requiring 100 respondents for the sample (Riyanto & Aglis, 2020). Purposive sampling, a non-probability sample approach, was employed in this study with a focus on West Kalimantan job searchers between the ages of 18 and 27 (Gen Z). Ages 18 to 27 represent a crucial transition period in life, marked by completing education and starting their first jobs, which significantly influences their perceptions of companies, their reputations, and employer attractiveness.

Out of the 230 respondents collected, only 194 were deemed suitable for further analysis. Some respondents were excluded as outliers because their data significantly differed and their values were much more extreme compared to the others. Data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) PLS and Partial Least Squares (PLS) with the Smart PLS version 4.0 application. Data testing began with two methods: the measurement model (Outer Model) and the structural model (Inner Model) (Ghozali, 2021).

Previous research has shown that employer attractiveness influences the intention to apply for a job (H1), social media influences the intention to apply (H3), employer attractiveness influences corporate reputation (H3), social media influences corporate reputation (H4), and corporate reputation influences the intention to pursue a job (H5). The desire to apply is influenced by the attractiveness of the employer (H6), and social media also affects this intention by mediating the company's reputation (H7). Thus, the structure of the investigation is evident in Figure 1:

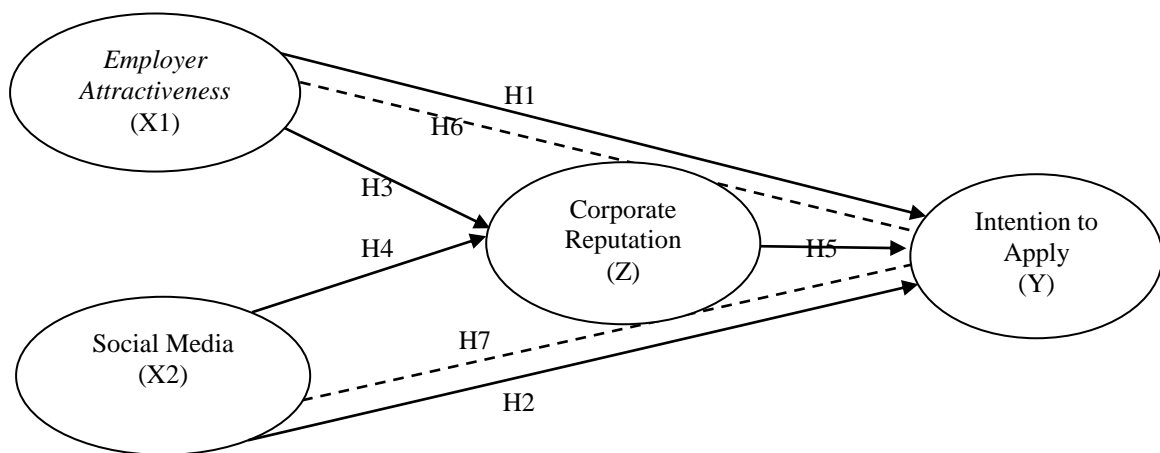


Figure 1. Research framework

3. Result and Discussion

Respondent Profile

With the aid of social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and others, the survey was disseminated online through Google Forms. Out of 230 respondents collected, only 194 were suitable for further analysis. Some respondents were excluded as outliers due to their data being significantly different and their values being much more extreme compared to others (Ghozali, 2021). The profile of this study's responses are dominated by females (73.8%), with the majority falling within the age range of 21-24 (54%). Most respondents are from Pontianak (26.3%), followed by Ketapang and Kubu Raya. Regarding educational attainment, the proportion of responders who have completed high school (SMAK/K) and bachelor's degree (S1) is equal, with each group comprising 97 individuals (50%). The other education levels, such as elementary (SD) and junior high school (SMP), had no respondents (0%).

Table 1. Respondent profile

Characteristics	Item	Frequency(N=194)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	46	26,2%
	Female	148	73,8%
Age	17-20	54	24,1%
	21-24	113	54,5%
	25-27	27	21,4%
Residence	Bengkayang	13	6,7%
	KapuasHulu	9	4,64%
	Kayong Utara	2	1,03%
	Ketapang	6	8,25%
	Kubu Raya	12	6,19%
	Landak	4	2,06%
	Melawi	8	4,125%
	Mempawah	8	4,12%
	Sambas	38	19,59%
	Sanggau	6	3,09%
Sekadau	5	2,58%	

Characteristics	Item	Frequency(N=194)	Percentage (%)
Education Level	Sintang	5	2,58%
	Pontianak	51	26,29%
	Singkawang	17	8,76%
	Elementary (SD)	0	0%
	SMP, or junior high school	0	0%
	High School Senior (SMA/K)	97	50%
	S1 Bachelor's Degree	97	50%
	Graduate-level (S2/S3)	0	0%

Measurement Model (Outer Model)

Testing for reliability, discriminant validity, and convergent validity are among the phases that must be examined while assessing a measurement model. In the validity tests, we aim to ensure that the indicators being assessed are both trustworthy and legitimate for measuring latent variables. The evaluation of reliability and validity is based on the results of the measurement model (Sa'diyah et al., 2024). In Table 2, the indicators for employer attractiveness, social media, business reputation, and intention to apply all have outer loading values above (0.7) (Hair et al., 2022). We can thus verify the correctness of this study since the outside loading values satisfy the requirements. For the subsequent assessments, Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) must both be higher than 0.70, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) must also be higher than 0.50 in order to meet the requirements (Hair et al., 2022). Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were determined to be above 0.70 and 0.50, respectively, suggesting that the instruments utilised are dependable. In Table 2 below, employer attractiveness (EA) has 5 indicators (Ek Styvén et al., 2022), social media (SM) has 3 indicators (Batee, 2019), corporate reputation (CR) has 6 indicators (Fombrun et al., 2000), and intention to apply (ITA) has 4 indicators (Ketut Sintaaasih et al., 2014).

Table 2. Results of validity and reliability testing

Variable	Item	Statements	Validity Test		CA	Reliability Test		Decision
			LF	Decision		CR	AVE	
Employer Attractiveness (EA)	EA_1	I'm drawn to a company that provides opportunities, motivation and recognition for growth.	0,816	Valid				
	EA_2	I'm excited about the prospect of joining a company with a welcoming environment where I feel accepted	0,781	Valid				
	EA_3	I'm interested in a company that encourages employees to mentor and share knowledge.		Valid	0,863	0,902	0,647	Reliable
	EA_4	A good and collaborative relationship with colleagues management motivates me to apply for a job	0,845	Valid				
	EA_5	I'm interested in applying to a company that offers stable job security	0,799	Valid				
Social Media (SM)	SM_1	Social media makes me feel more confident when applying for jobs because of the easy access to information.	0,778	Valid				
	SM_2	I feel confident applying for jobs : companies that have a good reputation on social media.	0,844	Valid	0,751	0,858	0,669	Reliable
	SM_3	The information provided by companies on social media comprehensive enough for me understand the positions offered.	0,777	Valid				
Corporate Reputation (CR)	CR_1	Before applying, I always consider companies whose values align with my personal beliefs.	0,830	Valid				
	CR_2	The reputation of a company's products/services important factor for me when	0,726	Valid				

Variable	Item	Statements	Validity Test		CA	Reliability Test		Decision
			LF	Decision		CR	AVE	
		deciding to join.						
	CR_3	I'm attracted to a company that has good leadership.	0,883	Valid	0,891	0,918	0,651	Reliable
	CR_4	I'm interested in joining a company that provides a conducive work environment.	0,852	Valid				
	CR_5	Companies that pay attention to social responsibility are more appealing for me to join.	0,827	Valid				
	CR_6	A stable financial condition and strong growth prospects for the future make me confident in applying for a job.	0,739	Valid				
Intention to Apply (ITA)	ITA_1	I'm confident that applying for a job at the company I've chosen is the right decision for my career.	0,816	Valid				
	ITA_2	I'm applying for a job that matches my field of expertise and abilities.	0,775	Valid	0,802	0,870	0,625	Reliable
	ITA_3	Before applying for a job, I conduct	0,802	Valid				
	ITA_4	observations about the company from various sources. I intend to apply for a job to achieve my life goals and financial stability.	0,769	Valid				

Note: LF $\geq 0,60$; AVE $\geq 0,50$; IC (Item Code); LF (Loading Factor); CA (Cronbach' alpha); CR (Composite reliability AVE (Average Variance Extracted)).

Based on the results of the discriminant validity analysis, measured using the HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio), it shows that all values between variables are below the set threshold of 0.90. This indicates that the analysis results can be considered valid and reliable (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 3. Discriminant validity (HTMT) analysis

	Corporate Reputation	Employer Attractiveness	Intention to Apply	Social Media
Corporate Reputation				
Employer Attractiveness	0,796			
Intention to Apply	0,802	0,606		
Social Media	0,772	0,404	0,707	

Note HTMT < 0,90

Structural Model (Inner Model)

After conducting the outer loading test and ensuring that all data requirements have been met, the following action is to evaluate the model of structure. This involves examining the correlations among latent variables, which includes assessing the R^2 value, analyzing model fit, and testing the hypotheses established earlier. Table 4 displays the results of the model fit test, specifically the Standardized Root Mean Residual (SRMR), which helps to assess how well the hypothesized model aligns with the data. In this step, the average difference between the correlation matrix that was seen and the correlation matrix that the model predicted is calculated. A value of less than 0.080 indicates a good model fit, and in this case, the SRMR value is 0.086, indicating a marginal fit. An adequate fit model is indicated by SRMR values between 0.08 and 0.10 (Karin et al., 2003). Additionally, the Normed Fit Index (NFI) is reported at 0.704. The SRMR value obtained meets the established criteria, confirming that the research model is adequate and acceptable (Yamin, 2023).

Regarding the R-Square value, the closer it is to 1, the better the model's ability to explain the dependent variable (Mahdiana & Amin, 2020). For corporate reputation (CR), the R-Square value is 0.667. This indicates that a significant portion of the variance in CR can be explained by employer attractiveness

(EA) and social media (SM), accounting for 66,7%, while the remaining 33,3% is attributed to other variables not examined in this study. Conversely, for intention to apply (ITA), the R-Square value is 0.498, suggesting that 49,8% of the variance in ITA is explained by EA and SM, with the remaining 50,2% due to other untested variables in this research.

Table 4. Model fit and R square (R2)

Criteria	Value
SRMR	0,086
NFI	0,704
Variable	R ² Value
CR	0,667
ITA	0,498

Note SRMR <0,80; NFI >0,50

This study employs hypothesis testing to evaluate the validity of the proposed ideas. There are two important factors to take into account while conducting hypothesis testing: The t-value and t-table comparison comes first; the p-value, which ought to be less than (0.05), comes second. Table 6 presents the sample mean, t-value, p-value, and results for each hypothesis tested. To determine whether a hypothesis is accepted or rejected, if the t-value is lower than (1.96) (two-tailed), the hypothesis is rejected or deemed insignificant. On the other hand, the hypothesis is deemed acceptable and significant if the t-value is more than (1.96) or to put it another way, has a significance level of 5% (Hair et al., 2022). The results of the hypothesis testing are shown in the following table.

Table 5. Hypotesis testing results

Hypotesis	Sample Mean	T-Value	P-Value	Result
Direct Effect				
H1: Employer Attractiveness has a significant negative effect on Intention to Apply.	0,099	1,036	0,300	Rejected
H2: Social Media has a significant positive effect on Intention to Apply.	0,232	2,243	0,025	Accepted
H3: Employer Attractiveness has a significant positive effect on Corporate Reputation.	0,553	8,497	0,000	Accepted
H4: Social Media has a significant positive effect on Corporate Reputation.	0,450	7,129	0,000	Accepted
H5: Corporate Reputation has a positive effect on Intention to Apply.	0,479	3,959	0,000	Accepted
Indirect Effect				
H6: The effect of Employer Attractiveness on Intention to Apply with Corporate Reputation as a mediator.	0,265	3,531	0,000	Accepted
H7: The effect of Social Media on Intention to Apply with Corporate Reputation as a mediator.	0,216	3,471	0,001	Accepted

Note t-value >1,96; p-value <0,50 (Hair et al., 2022).

The findings of the hypothesis test are separated into two categories: direct effect testing and indirect effect testing. Since H1 (employer attractiveness) has no discernible effect on intention to apply, we concentrate on the direct effects in this study. This is demonstrated by a p-value more than 0.05 and a t-value less than the t-table (1.96), both of which result in the rejection of this hypothesis. However, since their t-values are higher than the t-table (1.96), and their p-values are lower than 0.05, H2, H3, H4, and H5 exhibit substantial impacts and can be accepted. Both H6 and H7, which are mediated by corporate reputation, are regarded as significant for the indirect effects since their t-values are higher than the.

Discussion

The first hypothesis (H1) looks at how employer attractiveness affects applicants' intentions to apply. Based on the analysis results, with a sample mean of 0.099, the significance value obtained is 0.300, which is greater than (0.05), and the t-value is 1,036, which is less than 1.96. Therefore, the first hypothesis is rejected. This result suggests that the intention to apply is negatively and negligibly impacted by employer attractiveness. Thus, employer attractiveness is not a factor that decreases the intention to apply for jobs. This finding aligns with the work of Astrellia et al (2024), which also found that employer attractiveness does not significantly influence intention to apply. A negative correlation was identified, suggesting that as employer attractiveness increases, the interest in applying for jobs decreases.

The second hypothesis (H2) investigates how social media affects the intention to apply. The findings indicate that social media has a positive and significant impact on an applicant's intention to apply. This means that the more active and engaging a company's social media presence is, the higher the likelihood

that potential applicants will express an intention to apply. This finding aligns with the research by Hanu et al. (2021), which demonstrated that social media significantly influences intention to apply. Additionally, (Rani et al., 2022) found that the greater the use of a company's social media, the more interested job seekers become in obtaining information about recruitment opportunities.

The third hypothesis (H3) examines how employer attractiveness affects a company's reputation. The results show that employer attractiveness significantly and favorably affects a company's reputation. This means that companies that are appealing to employees tend to enjoy a better corporate reputation. This aligns with the research by Babikova & Bucek. (2019), which found that employer attractiveness significantly influences corporate reputation. Additionally, it is supported by the work of Ardiansyah & Sary. (2024), This demonstrates that an employer's attractiveness significantly improves a company's reputation. This suggests that the more attractive a company is to potential employees, especially among Generation Z—by offering a positive work environment and clear career opportunities—the more favorable its reputation will be.

The fourth hypothesis (H4) investigates the impact of social media on corporate reputation. The findings show that social media significantly and favorably affects a company's reputation. This suggests that the better a company utilizes social media, the stronger its corporate reputation will be. This finding is consistent with the research by Maboe et al. (2024), which demonstrated that social media significantly influences corporate reputation. In other words, social media platforms allow organizations to build and maintain the online reputation they desire while engaging with their target audience effectively.

The fifth hypothesis (H5) examines the impact of corporate reputation on the intention to apply for a job. The findings show that the intention to apply is positively and significantly impacted by a company's reputation. This means that a strong corporate reputation can enhance the interest of potential applicants in seeking employment with the company. This finding aligns with the research by Sobriyah. (2021), which also demonstrated that corporate reputation significantly influences the intention to apply. For talented individuals, a company's reputation is crucial when considering their future career paths. Respondents agree that when applying for a job, they make an effort to learn about the company's reputation.

The sixth hypothesis (H6) investigates the impact of employer attractiveness on the intention to apply for a job, with corporate reputation acting as a mediator. According to this study, corporate reputation acts as a mediating element, and employer attractiveness has a favorable and significant impact on the propensity to apply. This means that a company's appeal can influence a person's intention to apply for a job, but this effect is enhanced or mediated by the company's reputation. These findings are consistent with the research by Rosari. (2023), which also discovered that corporate reputation strengthens the relationship between employer attractiveness and the intention to apply, highlighting the crucial role corporate reputation plays in attracting potential employees.

The seventh hypothesis (H7) investigates how social media affects a person's intention to apply for a job, using a company's reputation as a mediating factor. The research found that social media has a significant positive effect on the intention to apply, with corporate reputation acting as a mediating factor. This means that while social media can boost someone's interest in applying, a strong corporate reputation is a crucial element that reinforces that decision. So, even though potential employees may be drawn in by social media, the company's reputation remains a key consideration before they decide to submit their job applications. This hypothesis aligns with the findings of Indra & Widoatmodjo. (2021) and Amara et al. (2023).

This research provides valuable insights for companies looking to attract potential applicants, especially among the increasingly dominant Generation Z in the job market. The study looks at how social media and employer attractiveness affect applicants' intentions to apply, using company reputation as a mediating factor. The results show that social media and the intention to apply, as well as the relationship between employer attractiveness and the intention to apply, are both significantly strengthened by company reputation.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the observed Generation Z respondents are using social media in their workplaces, with Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook being the most popular platforms. The research will employ a quantitative approach using Smart PLS to analyze the relationships between employer attractiveness, social

media, company reputation, and job application intentions. The sample will include 194 Generation Z respondents from West Kalimantan, selected based on criteria such as age, education, and job-seeking experience. The study may focus on specific industry sectors, such as technology, retail, or financial services, to provide more targeted insights. Additionally, the researchers will explore how social media influences company reputation across various platforms and the role of individual perceptions in shaping employer attractiveness.

This research found that employer attractiveness does not have a significant impact on the intention to apply for jobs. Simply put, a company's appeal is not enough to encourage Generation Z to apply for positions in West Kalimantan. On the other hand, social media has a positive and significant influence on the intention to apply. The use of social media by companies effectively boosts Generation Z's interest in applying for jobs. Furthermore, both employer attractiveness and social media significantly impact corporate reputation. The more attractive a company is, the better its reputation in the eyes of potential employees, and a positive presence on social media helps enhance that reputation. Additionally, corporate reputation positively affects the intention to apply. Generation Z tends to apply to companies with a good reputation. Finally, both employer attractiveness and social media significantly influence the intention to apply, with corporate reputation acting as a mediator. This means that a strong employer appeal enhances the intention to apply, while a good reputation strengthens the effect of social media in attracting applicants.

The limitations of this study include its geographic focus, which is restricted to West Kalimantan, meaning the results may not be generalizable to other regions. Additionally, the sample size of only 194 respondents may not be fully representative. The use of an online questionnaire could also exclude respondents who are less familiar with technology. Furthermore, this research only concentrated on a few variables, such as employer attractiveness, social media, corporate reputation, and intention to apply, without considering other factors. For future research, it would be beneficial for other researchers to explore additional variables such as compensation, work-life balance, recruitment practices, or employer prestige, among others.

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