

Masculinity And Femvertising: A Qualitative Study Of Male Consumers In The Skincare Industry

Maskulinitas Dan Femvertising: Studi Kualitatif Terhadap Konsumen Pria Dalam Industri Perawatan Kulit

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ABSTRACT

Femvertising refer to an advertising approach that incorporates feminist-oriented or women-empowerment messages. Although numerous studies explored its impact on female consumers, limited research has examined the role of femvertising as a predictor of male consumer' behavior, (particularly in relation to men's skincare products) and how male lifestyle can be incorporated as a mediating variable in the model. **Purpose:** In this study, we comprehensive examine previous studies to enhance understanding of more about the influence of femvertising on men's skincare purchase intention toward purchasing skincare and with particular attention to the mediating role of male lifestyle. **Design/methodology/approach:** This study, conducts a systematic literature review is conducted to synthesize and critically assess existing knowledge on femvertising, male consumer behavior, changing masculine norms and lifestyle factors that influence men's skin-care purchases decisions. Key themes, recurring trends in the literature, and research gaps. **Findings:** The review suggests that femvertising may shape impact men's attitudes and purchase intention toward skincare product. Specifically, this relationship appears to be influenced by several factors such as social comparison processes and evolving definitions of masculinity, and shifting standards in men's lifestyles. Related studies indicate that contemporary men often integrate grooming practices with their self-concept, which may enhance the positive relationship among femvertising, hedonic motivation, and purchase intention. **Limitations and Directions for Future Research:** Prior investigations on femvertising have predominantly focused on male respondents, with particular emphasis on their social class. Future empirical studies should broaden the scope to include a more diverse male population, encompassing varied socioeconomic backgrounds, to develop a comprehensive understanding of how lifestyle factors influence consumption behavior. Additionally, subsequent research could examine relevant constructs as potential mediators within the context of femvertising. **Practical Implications:** Insight into the social comparison processes elicited by alternative masculinity norms can assist companies in devising more effective femvertising strategies for marketing skincare products targeted at male consumers. **Originality/value:** This literature review synthesises current scholarship around communication and gendered consumption, offer new perspectives on femvertising and further examines men's responses to marketing of traditionally feminised products. This study explores masculinity in American cultural contexts, particularly in relation to dominant masculine ideology and evolving lifestyles. This leads to a more sophisticated understanding of how men use the consumption process and identifies potential directions for future research considering the evolving nature of gender roles (as boundaries between masculinity and femininity become increasingly blurred) within marketing and consumer culture.

Keywords: Femvertising, Male Consumers, Consumer Behavior, Skincare

ABSTRAK

Femvertising mengacu pada pendekatan periklanan yang memuat pesan-pesan berorientasi feminis atau pemberdayaan perempuan. Meskipun banyak studi telah mengeksplorasi dampaknya terhadap konsumen perempuan, penelitian yang mengkaji peran *femvertising* sebagai prediktor perilaku konsumen laki-laki (khususnya terkait produk perawatan kulit pria) serta bagaimana gaya hidup laki-laki

dapat dimasukkan sebagai variabel mediasi dalam model tersebut masih terbatas. Tujuan: Studi ini secara komprehensif mengkaji penelitian-penelitian terdahulu untuk memperdalam pemahaman mengenai pengaruh *femvertising* terhadap niat beli produk perawatan kulit pria, dengan memberikan perhatian khusus pada peran mediasi gaya hidup laki-laki. Desain/metodologi/pendekatan: Studi ini melakukan tinjauan pustaka sistematis untuk menyintesis dan menilai secara kritis pengetahuan yang ada mengenai *femvertising*, perilaku konsumen laki-laki, perubahan norma maskulinitas, serta faktor gaya hidup yang memengaruhi keputusan pembelian produk perawatan kulit pria. Fokus kajian mencakup tema-tema utama, tren yang berulang dalam literatur, dan kesenjangan penelitian. Temuan: Tinjauan ini menunjukkan bahwa *femvertising* dapat memengaruhi sikap dan niat beli laki-laki terhadap produk perawatan kulit. Secara khusus, hubungan ini tampaknya dipengaruhi oleh beberapa faktor, seperti proses perbandingan sosial, definisi maskulinitas yang terus berkembang, serta pergeseran ...standar dalam gaya hidup pria. Studi terkait menunjukkan bahwa pria masa kini sering kali mengintegrasikan praktik perawatan diri ke dalam konsep diri mereka, yang dapat memperkuat hubungan positif antara *femvertising*, motivasi hedonis, dan niat beli. Keterbatasan dan Arah Penelitian Mendatang: Penelitian sebelumnya mengenai *femvertising* sebagian besar berfokus pada responden pria, dengan penekanan khusus pada kelas sosial mereka. Studi empiris di masa depan sebaiknya memperluas cakupan dengan melibatkan populasi pria yang lebih beragam—mencakup berbagai latar belakang sosial-ekonomi—guna membangun pemahaman komprehensif tentang bagaimana faktor gaya hidup memengaruhi perilaku konsumsi. Selain itu, penelitian lanjutan dapat mengkaji konstruk relevan sebagai mediator potensial dalam konteks *femvertising*. Implikasi Praktis: Wawasan mengenai proses perbandingan sosial yang dipicu oleh norma maskulinitas alternatif dapat membantu perusahaan merancang strategi *femvertising* yang lebih efektif untuk memasarkan produk perawatan kulit yang ditujukan bagi konsumen pria. Orisinalitas/Nilai: Tinjauan pustaka ini menyintesis kajian terkini seputar komunikasi dan konsumsi yang dikaitkan dengan gender, menawarkan perspektif baru mengenai *femvertising*, serta mengkaji lebih lanjut respons pria terhadap pemasaran produk yang secara tradisional dianggap feminin. Studi ini mengeksplorasi maskulinitas dalam konteks budaya Amerika, khususnya terkait dengan ideologi maskulin yang dominan dan gaya hidup yang terus berkembang. Hal ini menghasilkan pemahaman yang lebih mendalam mengenai bagaimana pria memanfaatkan proses konsumsi serta mengidentifikasi arah penelitian potensial di masa depan dengan mempertimbangkan sifat peran gender yang terus berubah (seiring semakin kaburnya batasan antara maskulinitas dan feminitas) dalam budaya pemasaran dan konsumen.

Kata kunci: Femvertising, Konsumen Pria, Perilaku Konsumen, Perawatan Kulit

1. Introduction

Femvertising a marketing strategy recently brought to attention, applies feminist theory to promote product. It challenges common stereotypes about women's live and promotes women's empowerment (Negm, 2023; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). While femvertising has attracted considerable academic attention regarding its effects on female consumers (Buckley et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2025), few studies have investigated male consumer reactions and Views (Kenalemang-Palm, 2023; Negm, 2023). This research gap is notable, given that several Asia markets, including Indonesia, are emerging as promising area in the otherwise slow-growing men's skincare sector. Men are increasingly recognized as a key consumer segment important and fast-growing consumer group within the cosmetics and personal care market (Ota et al., 2023).

Traditionally, the use of skincare and cosmetic product has traditionally been associated with woman. This gendered association is, however, undergoing a dramatic evolution in response to growing conceptualizations of contemporary masculinity (Connor et al., 2021). The emergence of the "metrosexual" male consumer, an urban male consumer who pays close attention to grooming and appearance, reflect a shift from traditional masculinity toward more proactive self-care practices (Ota et al., 2023). Illustrates a departure from conventional masculine scripts. Although these practices remain framed in reflected in the growing success of beauty and grooming products targeted at male consumers. Skincare has therefore become more than a passing trend among mean driven by the desire to appear clean, youthful, well-

groomed in both professional and personal settings (Hamshaw & Gavin, 2021; Hester & Hehman, 2023; Sarpila et al., 2024).

This study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of how *femvertising* shapes men's interest in purchasing skincare products in Pekanbaru, Indonesia. Departing from traditional views, this qualitative study identifies diverse and complex motivations underlying men's adoption of skincare products. A key finding of this research indicates that men's interest in skincare products is not solely driven by aesthetics or functional benefits such as enhanced confidence or addressing skin problems (Hamshaw & Gavin, 2021; Kenalemang-Palm, 2023a). Instead, this study uncovers a unique motivation stemming from a feeling of being 'intimidated' by well-groomed and attractive female colleagues. This motivation, arising from social comparison with professional and well-maintained female peers, represents an original contribution of this research, enriching the understanding of male consumer behavior drivers and the expanding definition of masculinity in contemporary society (Caliskan et al., 2024; Tso, 2022).

Through thematic analysis of in-depth interviews data conducted with 54 male participants. This study explores, their perceptions, attitudes, and experiences regarding femvertising and its influence on their skincare product choices. In doing so this study contributes to the literature by offering context specific insights within the Indonesian context and how femvertising campaigns may indirectly shape men's consumption behavior, particularly in product categories traditionally perceived as feminine. This study is unique in its aim to investigate what motivates males to purchase skin care products.

2. Literature Review

This section creates the theoretical framework that is crucial for this thesis, which intends to analyse masculinity and femvertising as well as male consumerism within skincare consumption. The research is discussed with reference to relevant social theories about changing meanings around masculinity, and the work-centric motivations driving men's skin-care purchases.

Evolution of Masculinity and the Metrosexual Lifestyle

Historically, masculinity has been associated with a lower tendency to engage in self-care practices, particularly skincare and cosmetics use. Such practices have traditionally been viewed as deviating from conventional masculine norms, potentially threatening men's sense of masculine identity. However, conception of masculinity has changed significantly over time. Modern men increasingly pay attention to their appearance, and the use of beauty products is increasingly viewed as less incompatible with traditional masculinity norms which traditionally emphasize a natural and unadorned male appearance, rather a multiverse opening up that challenges strict boundaries between masculine and feminine consumption (Kenalemang-Palm, 2023).

One of the most widely recognized change is the emergence of the "metrosexual" male a well-groomed urban man (Putranto et al., 2021). Metrosexual men are typically associated with metropolitan areas, live a modern lifestyle and are attentive to while maintaining a masculine self-image. They are willing to invest time and money in enhancing their appearance which may enhance their self-esteem and well-being. This trend reflects a growing participation of men in the men's grooming market as a whole. Today, male identity is increasingly shaped by modern culture expectations. Though public-figures and society actors and indirectly through media representations of ideal masculinity. In this context men's increasingly constructed by media representations and the beauty and grooming industry (Ota et al., 2023).

Advertisements for men's grooming products often constructs representations of "hybrid" and flexible masculinities, a strategy that may be interpreted as drawing on the

contested contemporary nation (but arguably false) notion of a perceived crisis of masculinity-- which is situated within consumer culture. Men are increasingly targeted of consumer capitalism where desirable appearance is linked to financial and romantic success (Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019).

Social Comparison Theory

Social comparison theory has received increasing scholarly attention, particularly in relation to social media, body image, and self-esteem (Caliskan et al., 2024). This process of comparing oneself with others may shape men's consumption of appearance-related and skincare products. This can be seen in the cross-cultural evaluation of men based on physical appearance (Kenalemang-Palm, 2023). A person self-confidence may depend on how they believe others perceive them, or actually perceives them. Self-confidence may also be associated with perceived physical appearance. This may encourage some men to use cosmetics to enhance their appearance as a way to project greater confidence (Hamshaw & Gavin, 2021).

The perceived threat generated by the appearance or attractiveness of woman in workplace (one of the key findings of this study) can be understood the lens of social comparison theory. Men may compare their own grooming and appearance standards with those of women around them. Such implicit comparison may encourage men to invest more in self-care routines that may enhance their perceived self-presentation, and in professional and social interactions (Caliskan et al., 2024).

Social Influence and Subjective Norms

Consumer behavior does not dependent solely on individual factors, but also strongly influenced by social factors. Subjective norm refers to consumers' that important others expect consumers to perform refrain from certain behaviors and previous studies have shown that it significantly influences on cosmetic purchases. Social influences, including perceived social approval or disapproval by important reference groups can also have direct effect on consumer behavior as well (Ayuda et al., 2025). Moreover, studies indicate that subjective norms exert a stronger effect on purchase intentions among male consumers than among female consumers. In certain products categories (Hamshaw & Gavin, 2021).

Men's adoption and use of skincare products are largely influenced by the broader social context (Pradani & Suhanti, 2020). In some situations, men are reluctant to use products traditionally associated with femininity because they fear social misidentification or embarrassment. Male grooming products are therefore developed and marketed as non-feminized alternative for men allowing them to avoid potential social consequences associated with using cosmetics specifically designed for women (Tso, 2022).

Femvertising and Its Role in Gender Shifting

Femvertising is an advertising approach that emerged from deliberate efforts to challenge gender stereotypes and address women's issues while promoting specific products or brands (Varghese & Kumar, 2020). Social impact-oriented messaging is commonly used by brands to communicate values and engage consumers simultaneously particularly in fashion and beauty industries (Yang et al., 2025). Femvertising has the potential to increase brand awareness, generative positive emotional response and foster engagement with beauty brands, and improve consumer attitudes toward advertisements (Negm, 2023).

While previous studies have mainly examined the influence of femvertising on female consumers, male consumers have been largely overlooked in existing research. Male consumers are likely to perceive femvertising differently depending on their gender identity, prevailing social norms and personal belief. In some cases, femvertising may be perceived as an implicit critique of traditional masculinity thereby triggering defensive responses among men (Yang et al., 2025).

Other studies that femvertising, particularly when it incorporates uplifting visuals and diverse representation can build trust and emotional connection beyond female audiences. This implies the presence of an underlying psychological mechanism. Through which male consumers may internalize the emotional cues communicated through femvertising in ways that align with their evolving self-concept (Ayuda et al., 2025). Moreover, femvertising can also inspire males to view not merely as objects of visual pleasure, but as autonomous individuals with agency, and to reflect on their own biases, and develop a more nuanced understanding of women's empowerment.

3. Methodology

Therefore, this study employed a qualitative methodology with an exploratory research design to gain deeper insights into how femvertising affects men's purchase intentions toward skincare product.

The study aimed to explore the motivations underlying this behavior, encompassing participants personal experiences and perceptions of masculinity. Given that qualitative method allows researchers to capture subtle, contextual, and personal interpretations from participants (Jameel et al., 2018; Mohajan, 2018), a qualitative approach was chosen. An exploratory design is appropriate for examining phenomena that are not yet well understood, particularly when the study aims to generate new insights and provide a broader understanding (Hunter, 2019; Olawale et al., 2023; Reiter & Bernd, 2017).

Participants

This study was conducted in Pekanbaru among 54 males. Purposive sampling methods were used so that a wide range of ages and backgrounds could be included among participants, thus representing different socio-economic groups within the urban male population. The sample consisted of adult male participants who had used at least 1 skincare product in the previous 30 days and agreed to provide post-experiment comments on masculinity topics as part of their responses to a video presentation featuring an advertisement for men's perfumed products, i.e., topical medication. In order to collect the wider range generational perspectives on gender norms and consumption behavior, we positioned our participants as being aged from early twenties(s) simply whilst till late-twenties. To collect rich, and relevant data (the former adds rigor) we utilized purposive sampling (Campbell et al., 2020; Ansori et al., 2022)

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, which allowed for greater flexibility to probe relevant areas and provided participants with sufficient opportunity to express their thoughts, feelings and experiences adequately (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Kallio et al., 2016). The interviewer met each of them for about 45 to 60 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim following the acquisition of informed consent from participants.

The interview questions were designed to explore five key areas:

- Participants' experience with skincare products and their personal care routines
- Their perceptions of femvertising and the meaning conveyed through such advertisements.
- What young men conceptualize masculinity and how this construct relates to their use of personal care products.
- Factors that motivate their purchase and use of skincare products, including social influences, media exposure, and social comparison?
- More specifically, how representations shape find-out, how perceptions of intimidations by polished and attractive working women shape young men's reflections on their own skincare?

Data Analysis

The data consisted of interview transcripts which were analyzed, using a stage-based approach (Ahmed et al., 2025; Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Mwita, 2025) as follow:

1. Data familiarization: The researchers immersed themselves in the interview transcripts by reading them several times to become familiar with all aspects of the data.
2. First Cycle Coding: Initial codes were assigned to significant ideas, concepts and patterns.
3. Identifying themes: Codes were also to identify latent thematic categories.
4. The resultant themes: were then evaluated for internal consistency and external coherency across the entire dataset.
5. Finalizing and Naming the Themes: Each of the themes was concisely defined so it is obvious what each theme contains.
6. Reporting: The analysis was supported with illustrative quotes from participants to enliven the results
7. supported by direct quotes from participants to strengthen the findings.

The primary focus of the analysis was to identify emerging patterns regarding men's motivations for using skincare products, the impact of femvertising, and how social comparison, particularly with "neat and attractive" working women, influenced their definition of masculinity and consumption behavior.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues, quality approval which is performed by ethical commission supervision guidance. Informed consent for participating in data collection procedures with regards to anonymization and confidentiality, as well as the option of withdrawal from participation during or after having participated in interviews were obtained prior to any interviewing. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent. Participant identities were anonymized in both the transcripts and final research report (Nii Laryeafio & Ogbewe, 2023; Roshaidai & Arifin, 2018). Pseudonyms or unique identifiers were used to protect participants and ensure the integrity of research methodology (Nii Laryeafio & Ogbewe, 2023).

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents a summary of the results of qualitative research on performance-based men, how they relate to themselves and experience as femvertising consumers who also reflect changes in masculinity norms. Using social comparison theory of masculine identity development, this analysis contributed to the literature by contextualizing these findings theoretically.

Shifting Masculinity and Skincare Product Adoption

This study found that skincare product use was common of skincare product use among male participants in urban Pekanbaru, which ranged from basic to more specialized products including facial cleanser, masks, toners, and moisturizers. These findings highlight a significant shift in the social norms surrounding masculinity, as self-care practices were historically associated with woman or femininity (Diniyah et al., 2023). Contemporary male consumers increasingly regarded their physical appearance as an important aspect of self-presentation, suggesting that masculinity has evolved in ways that place greater emphasis on personal grooming (Chairina et al., 2023; Diniyah et al., 2023). This patten is relevant to the concept of the "metrosexual", urban men who care about their appearance, and are willing to spend money on grooming products (Perdana, 2015; Sobia & Sharif, 2016). This concern with appearances is

shaped not only by social media exposure but also driven internal motivations to improve personal attractiveness (Diniyah et al., 2023).

The interviews revealed that a several male participants reported using lip gloss. Suggesting a gradual loosening of traditional gender boundaries and an expansion of what is considered acceptable within contemporary masculinity. Products traditionally associated with femininity are increasingly being adopted by men. Some participants used lip gloss to enhance their self-confidence, whereas others used it for practical reasons, such as preventing dry or chapped lips. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that men use cosmetics to enhance their physical appearance and boost self-confidence (Diniyah et al., 2023). In addition, these practices can be understood as part of broader self-care routines which may positively influence overall well-being (Paasschen et al., 2015). Literature shows that in some cases men engage in body image management guided by specific characteristics, constrained by their self-preferred identities (Hsu, 2018).

A key finding of this study is that the dominant reason some men use skincare products themselves even if they don't require it, feeling 'intimidated' by neat and attractive professional women. Unlike women, men have a baseline reference for self-comparison and are aware that professional female colleagues are often consistently well-groomed all the time every single day. Social Comparison Theory can help explain phenomenon positing that individuals evaluate themselves relative to others (Fardouly et al., 2021; Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015). In this context, the well-groomed professional women serve as a standard for upward social comparison.

The experience of this intimidation is not solely related to personal aesthetic but also carrier significant professional and social implications. Men use their physical appearance in the workplace (Chairina et al., 2023). Research indicates that physical appearance to often the first aspect-noticed in public, prompting men to groom themselves more carefully and, above all, to boost self-confidence. Moreover, economic literature suggests that physical appearance can influences income; men who score below average attractiveness scales often exam less than standard benchmarks (Das & De Loach, 2011; Ridwan et al., 2017). Consequently, investments in self-care are regarded as essential for securing employment and garnering admiration in both professional and social contexts (Diniyah et al., 2023). Men, like women, now occupy the "to-be-looked-at" category in which heightened self-monitoring and social scrutiny encourage individuals to become "aesthetic entrepreneurs" through self-improvement (Kenalemang-Palm, 2023b).

Social Influence and Evolving Norms

Based on male consumer behavior in Pekanbaru, this norm has been shown to evolve, despite the social environment sometimes perceiving such practices tendentiously, suggesting that men do not require beauty products - different from women (Irawan & Wachidin Widjaja, 2011). Men may also avoid these products due to fears of being labeled homosexual or as users of woman-oriented product users so they steer clear away from it (Hsu & Chanthapratheep, n.d.). The male grooming sector has adapted its offerings to mitigate social stigma, further facilitating broader acceptance of male self-care practices.

Moreover, sociocultural factors, including social media (Diniyah et al., 2023; Hamshaw & Gavin, 2021; Khan et al., 2017) also contribute to men's motivation for self-care. Many men are now subject to professional and social expectations to appear neat and well-groomed, which has become integrated into modern conceptions of masculinity (Roro Lia Chairina et al., 2023).

The Role of Femvertising in the Context of Changing Masculinity

The indirect effect originates from femvertising, which conveys powerful messages that empower women and seeks to challenge gender-based stereotypes associated with sex. Femvertising often portrays strong, independent men's perceptions of women (usually in a

business context) holding out an aspirational image or ideal that may change how men view woman. Such femvertising campaigns may unintentionally incorporate these exemplary portrayals into the reference group that men use for social in workplace settings. Thus, even though these advertising are not directly targeted at men, they contribute to social ecosystem in which woman's well-maintained appearance remains a salient norm, influencing men to engage in self-care and grooming to avoid feeling 'intimidated' or professionally and socially disadvantaged.

5. Conclusion

This qualitative study provides detailed insights into the complex interplay of social factors influencing male consumer behaviour in skincare, particularly highlighting the role of femvertising and adaptations in masculine identity, especially in Pekanbaru, Indonesia. Overall, the key findings are that high uptake of skincare products among urban males is driven not only by desire for physical enhancement and self-esteem but also importantly by feelings of 'intimidation' or 'social comparison with well-groomed, attractive professional women (Fardouly et al., 2021; Fardouly & Vartanian, 2015). These facts confirm that masculine identity in Indonesia is evolving, with self-care becoming an integral component due to professional and workplace demands (Chairina et al., 2023; Diniyah et al., 2023).

The study notes that some male respondents used lip gloss, a product traditionally considered feminine, reflecting the broader scope and flexibility embraced by its consumers (Hsu, 2018). The use of these-product is motivated by functional benefits and increased self-confidence in social situations (Paasschen et al., 2015). These findings offer enhanced insight into the application of social comparison theory in male consumer behavior while demonstrating that femvertising, despite not directly targeting men as a defined audience may indirectly influence their perceptions and behaviors through reinforcing social norms regarding appearance maintenance.

Limitations and Research Implications

This research has several limitations that pave the way for future studies. First, the study did not explicitly define the criteria for the men included (e.g., socio-economic status), which means the findings might be more representative of a particular segment. Therefore, future research is expected to conduct studies on men with lower-to-middle incomes to obtain a more comprehensive perspective. Second, the geographical focus on Pekanbaru necessitates comparative studies in various Indonesian cities to explore how socio-economic status, cultural background, and exposure to global trends influence men's grooming practices.

Third, a longitudinal study tracking the evolution of these practices in Pekanbaru over time could illuminate the driving forces behind the observed changes. Fourth, the use of other qualitative methods such as focuses groups or additional in-depth interviews could provide richer insights into men's motivations, attitudes, and experiences related to personal care. Furthermore, investigating the impact of media representation, advertising, and social media on men's perceptions of masculinity and grooming behavior is crucial. Finally, exploring market segmentation within the male grooming market in Pekanbaru, considering factors such as age, lifestyle, and product preferences, holds significant potential.

Practical Implications

These insights hold practical value for companies and marketers within the skincare industry. The third application of girly advertising, specifically femvertising, extends beyond merely conveying the functional benefits of skincare products or adopting traditional masculine advertising targeted at men. Instead, it can strategically divert focus from social comparison by addressing men's concerns regarding their appearance in relation to professional success and

competitive environments. This approach allows marketers to develop more nuanced communication strategies that engage the psychological motivations of men, thereby redefining concepts of masculinity and crafting messages that align with men's aspirations for a confident presence in socially competitive, consumer-driven contexts.

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