

Influences of Individual Differences, Internet Communication Motives, and Internet Usage on Social Well-Being and Satisfaction

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Abstract

The present study examines the influence of dispositions (i.e., unwillingness to communicate, locus of control), internet communication motives, and the amount of internet use on social well-being and satisfaction. There are 485 participants in this study. The findings indicate the relationships among dispositions, internet communication motives, internet use, social well-being, and satisfaction. Specifically, the locus of control and interpersonal communication motives are the significant predictors of both social well-being and satisfaction. Those who are internal-looking or believe that they can control what happens in their lives prefer using internet for information searching and sharing and interpersonal communication and may have positive social well-being. Moreover, those who are external-looking or believe that their lives are shaped by other factors beyond their control prefer using internet for interpersonal communication and social networking and may feel satisfied with their online communication.

Keywords: uses and gratification theory, individual differences, internet use, internet motivation, social well-being and satisfaction

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อิทธิพลของความแตกต่างระหว่างบุคคล แรงจูงใจ และการใช้อินเทอร์เน็ต ต่อความสุขทางสังคมและความพึงพอใจ

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้ทำการศึกษา อิทธิพลของความแตกต่างระหว่างบุคคล แรงจูงใจ และปริมาณเวลาในการใช้อินเทอร์เน็ต ที่มีผลต่อความสุขทางสังคมและความพึงพอใจของคนไทย การวิจัยนี้เก็บข้อมูลจากกลุ่มตัวอย่าง 485 คน ผลการวิจัยพบความสัมพันธ์ของตัวแปรหลัก ดังนี้ ความแตกต่างระหว่างบุคคลและแรงจูงใจในการใช้อินเทอร์เน็ตเพื่อการสื่อสารระหว่างบุคคล เป็นตัวแปรหลักในการทำนายความสุขทางสังคมและความพึงพอใจ คนที่เชื่อว่าตนเองสามารถควบคุมสิ่งต่าง ๆ ที่เกิดขึ้นในชีวิต ชอบที่จะใช้อินเทอร์เน็ตเพื่อค้นหาและแจกจ่ายข้อมูลและเพื่อสื่อสารระหว่างบุคคล คนกลุ่มนี้จะมีความสุขทางสังคม ส่วนคนที่เชื่อว่าสิ่งที่เกิดขึ้นชีวิตไม่สามารถควบคุมได้ ชอบที่จะใช้อินเทอร์เน็ตเพื่อการสื่อสารระหว่างบุคคลและการสร้างเครือข่ายทางสังคม คนกลุ่มนี้จะมีพึงพอใจในการใช้อินเทอร์เน็ตเพื่อการสื่อสาร

คำสำคัญ: ทฤษฎีการใช้ประโยชน์และความพึงพอใจ ความแตกต่างระหว่างบุคคล การใช้อินเทอร์เน็ต แรงจูงใจในการใช้อินเทอร์เน็ต ความสุขทางสังคมและความพึงพอใจ

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Introduction

Around the world, the Internet has become one of the most crucial parts of people's lives and well-being. Within the past years, we evidence the drastic growth of Internet users, especially in Asian countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, China, and the Philippines. In Thailand, the latest evidence shows that there were approximately 38 million Internet users in 2015 (Internet World Stats, 2015). Recent research suggested that one of the important reasons Thai people used the Internet was to communicate interpersonally and socially with friends and family (Dumrongsiri & Pornsakulvanich, 2010b; Pornsakulvanich, 2007; Pornsakulvanich & Dumrongsiri, 2013).

There have been a number of studies of Internet use for interpersonal, social, and relational communication. Most research has been conducted in the United States and Europe. One of the pioneer studies investigated Internet use for relational communication and relationship development in the online setting in which physical and nonverbal cues are restricted (Walther, 1992). Some research looked at individual differences and motivation to understand Internet use for interpersonal and social communication (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Pornsakulvanich, Haridakis, & Rubin, 2008; Sun, Rubin, & Haridakis, 2008). Other studies explored how personality traits affected Internet use for social networking (Hughes,

Rowe, Batey, & Lee, 2012; Moore & McElroy, 2012; Pornsakulvanich & Dumrongsiri, 2012; Ryan & Xenos, 2011).

In Thailand, most research examined Internet use in general and reported the data in descriptive, but did not employ inferential statistics (National Electronics and Computer Technology Center, 2010). Scarce research in Thailand examined Internet use for interpersonal communication (Pornsakulvanich, 2010), Internet motivation (Pornsakulvanich, 2007), and the effects of Internet use on well-being (Pornsakulvanich, 2008). Little is known about the relationships among individual differences, Internet communication motives, Internet use, social well-being, and satisfaction of Thai Internet users. Thus, this study examined the contributions of dispositions (i.e., unwillingness to communicate, locus of control), Internet communication motives, and the amount of Internet use in predicting social well-being and satisfaction.

Theoretical Framework

1. Uses and Gratifications (U&G)

The uses and gratifications (U&G) perspective was used as a theoretical framework to explain the interrelationships among dispositions, Internet communication motives, Internet use, social well-being and satisfaction. The traditional U&G framework posits that people differ in their social and

psychological conditions, which may influence how and why they use media to fulfill their needs and the outcomes of using media (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). U&G researchers explained that people communicate to gratify their felt needs, which come from social and psychological conditions. These needs produce motives that affect communication behaviors, which result in cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Rubin & Rubin, 1992).

According to Rubin (2002), the main premise of U&G consists of several assumptions. First, people are active, goal-directed, and motivated in selecting media. Second, people select and use the appropriate communication channels to gratify their needs and wants. Third, people have different communication behaviors, which are based upon social and psychological factors. Fourth, social and psychological factors influence how well media can satisfy people's needs and wants. Fifth, media can be functional alternatives to other channels of communication. Finally, people are usually more influential than media, but not always.

The U&G perspective has been used to help explain uses and effects of interpersonal and mediated communication channels (Rubin & Rubin, 1989; Rubin, Perse, & Barbato, 1988), and uses and effects of new media technologies such as the Internet and social networking

sites (Dumrongsiri & Pornsakulvanich, 2010b; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000).

Literature Review

1. Locus of Control

Locus of control is a disposition that reflects a person's beliefs about his or her control over life and environment (Rotter, 1966). People with a more internal locus of control believe that they can control what happen in their lives and are responsible for their own behaviors. People with a more external locus of control believe that their lives and behaviors are shaped by factors beyond their control such as luck and environment (Rotter, 1966).

Locus of control has been found to impact media use, media effects, and communication satisfaction. For example, Rubin (1993) found that externally controlled people were less satisfied with communication and showed more ritualistic communication motives than did internals. Hoffman, Novak, and Schloser (2003) found that externals tended to use the Internet for ritualistic purposes, whereas internals tended to use the Internet for instrumental purposes. Haridakis (2006) reported that external locus of control was positively related to media violence. Pornsakulvanich (2008) found that externals spent more time on the Internet and were more likely to use certain Internet functions

including instant messaging/chat rooms than were internals.

2. Unwillingness to Communicate

Unwillingness to communicate (UC) is a communication disposition (Daly, 2002) that reflects “a chronic tendency to avoid and/or devalue oral communication” (Burgoon, 1976, p. 61). The UC construct contains two dimensions: (a) Approach–avoidance (UC-AA), which is the extent to which a person participates in his/her interpersonal interaction; and (b) reward (UC-RW), which is a person’s perceptions about his/her interpersonal interaction (Burgoon, 1976). People with greater levels of unwillingness to communicate tend to exhibit communication avoidance and anxiety behaviors and feel less rewarded in interpersonal communication.

Prior studies indicated that people who avoid face-to-face communication and feel it is less rewarding are more likely to use the Internet or other media to compensate for interpersonal communication deficiencies (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). Scealy, Phillips, and Stevenson (2002) found the relationship between communication avoidance behavior and Internet motives. Those who avoided face-to-face communication tended to use the Internet for more leisurely and recreational purposes. However, some studies found that people who enjoyed face-to-face communication would feel close with their online partners or perceived

satisfaction with their online relationships than those who avoided face-to-face communication (Pornsakulvanich, Haridakis, & Rubin, 2008). Other studies found no differences between UC-AA and UC-RW in the amount of Internet use (Ma & Leung, 2006).

According to U&G, understanding background characteristics influence people motives for using media. Accordingly, media use motivation is central to the U&G model.

3. Internet Communication Motives

In this study, Internet communication motives refer to the reasons people use the Internet for interpersonal communication. Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974) suggested that motivation influences communication choices, strategies, and behaviors. The ongoing study of Internet use motivation provides us a better understanding of people’s communication choices and behaviors and their reasons to use the Internet for interpersonal and/or social communication.

Previous studies have examined motives for using various types of new media technologies such as the Internet (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Wolfradt & Doll, 2001), Short Message Services (Leung, 2007; Pornsakulvanich & Dumrongsiri, 2007), and social networking sites (Dumrongsiri & Pornsakulvanich, 2010b; Ryan & Xenos, 2011).

Some studies found the relationship between motives and other variables such as user dispositions, the amount of Internet use, and communication outcomes. For example, Wolfradt and Doll (2001) found that visiting chatrooms was positively related to interpersonal communication motivation, but negatively related to information motivation. Pornsakulvanich, Haridakis, and Rubin (2008) found that those who used the Internet for self-fulfillment purposes felt satisfied with their online communication.

4. Amount of Internet Use

Evidence suggests that the amount and types of Internet use are related to user dispositions, motivation, and social well-being and satisfaction (Dumrongsiri & Pornsakulvanich, 2010a; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Pornsakulvanich, Haridakis, & Rubin, 2008; Wolfradt & Doll, 2001; Wright, 2000). For instance, Pornsakulvanich (2008) found that externally controlled users spent more time than internally controlled users using a particular Internet function: instant messaging and chat rooms. However, Dumrongsiri and Pornsakulvanich (2010a) studied Internet use for social support in Thailand and found that internals were more likely to spend time on the Internet seeking and providing support than were externals.

Moreover, evidence has suggested that types of Internet use were related Internet

motives. Wolfradt and Doll (2001) found that interpersonal motivation contributed to chatroom and e-mail use. Entertainment motivation predicted playing computer games. Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) found that information-seeking motivation positively predicted WWW browsing and negatively predicted e-mail use. Relating to the relationship between amount of Internet use and people's well-being, Wright (2000) found older adults who spent more time communicating on the Internet were more satisfied with their online support network.

5. Social Well-Being and Satisfaction

Social well-being refers to "the appraisal of one's circumstance and functioning in the society" (Keyes, 1998, p.122). Keyes proposed 5 dimensions of social well-being: social integration, social acceptance, social contribution, social actualization, and social coherence. Social integration refers to the extent to which people feel belong to their communities. Social acceptance refers to the extent to which people trust others and think that others are generally kind. Social contribution is to what extent people feel that they are valued to the society. Social actualization is the extent to which people feel hopeful about the future of society. Social coherence is the extent to which people understand society and what is happening around them (Keyes, 1998). Five dimensions of social well-being

were investigated to understand people's feeling toward online participation and their functioning in online communities.

In this study, satisfaction refers to the overall satisfaction with online communication. Hecht (1978) defined communication satisfaction as the positive reinforcement that is related to the fulfillment of positive communicative expectations. Prior evidence found a link between perceived values of mobile phone use and communication satisfaction (Pornsakulvanich & Dumrongsiri, 2009). Moreover, empirical studies revealed that dispositions and Internet use affected the outcomes of Internet use and well-being such as Internet satisfaction and relationship closeness (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Pornsakulvanich, Haridakis, & Rubin, 2008). Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) found that UC-RW and information-seeking motivation predicted Internet satisfaction. Pornsakulvanich, Haridakis, and Rubin (2008) found that those felt face-to-face communication to be rewarding would be satisfied with their online communication.

Research Questions

In summary, research indicates the linkage among several variables: locus of control, unwillingness to communicate, Internet communication motives, the amount of Internet use, and social well-being and satisfaction. However, most research was conducted in the

Western countries such as the United States and Europe. The merit of this study is to find the interrelationships among all variables in the non-Western contexts.

Most Internet research in Thailand reported the Internet usage in the descriptive data, but did not use the inferential statistics (National Electronics and Computer Technology Center, 2010). Limited research looked at Internet use for interpersonal communication (Pornsakulvanich, 2010), Internet motivation (Pornsakulvanich, 2007), Internet addiction and well-being (Pornsakulvanich, 2008), and Internet support satisfaction (Dumrongsiri & Pornsakulvanich, 2010a). There was an insufficient research to understand the interrelationships among people's dispositions, motivation, Internet use, and well-being. It is noteworthy to investigate these relationships to understand Internet usage in Thailand, specifically. Hence, Research Questions 1a and 1b were posed:

RQ1a: How do dispositions (i.e., locus of control, unwillingness to communicate),

Internet communication motives, amount of Internet use explain social well-being?

RQ1b: How do dispositions (i.e., locus of control, unwillingness to communicate), Internet communication motives, amount of Internet use explain satisfaction?

Method

1. Sample and Procedure

Survey research was conducted to collect the data from Thai people who resided in Bangkok, particularly densely populated areas including office areas, university campuses, shopping malls, and recreation centers. People who lived in Bangkok were a suitable representation of Internet users because they used the Internet in their daily lives, and the Internet services were widely covered and easily accessible. The present study employed a purposive sampling method to select participants who used the Internet. Participants were approached randomly and asked for a volunteer participation. Before completing the questionnaire, an informed consent was distributed to provide information about the study, the participant's voluntary for participation, and a confidentiality of responses. The questionnaire contained 7 sections: Locus of control, unwillingness to communicate, Internet communication motives, the amount of Internet use, social well-being, satisfaction, and demographics.

Overall, there were 485 participants; male = 194 (40%), female = 290 (60%). One participant did not report gender. Most participants (36.9%) were in the 18-25 age group, 17.7% were less than 18, 19.8% were 26-32, 15.9% were 33-39, 5.8% were 40-46, 3.9% were 47 and above. Most participants

(62.4%) had a bachelor degree, 22.7% of participants had a high school diploma, 8.5% of participants had a graduate degree, and 6.2% had a vocational degree. The average minutes spent daily for each function: 103 minutes on instant messaging, 102 minutes on general WWW, 91 minutes on social networking, and 57 minutes on e-mail.

2. Measurement

Locus of control. A shortened version of Levenson's (1974) scale was used to measure participants' locus of control. It was used reliably in prior studies (Haridakis, 2006; Pornsakulvanich, 2008). Participants indicated their degree of agreement with 12 statements on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The statements represent powerful others control (e.g., "I feel like what happens in my life is mostly determined by powerful others.") chance control (e.g., "To a great extent my life is controlled by accidental happenings.") and internal control (e.g., "My life is determined by my own actions.") Powerful others and chance control represent external control. Responses to external control items were recoded. Higher scores indicated greater internal control. The mean index was 3.41 (SD = 0.45, Cronbach α = .68).

Unwillingness to communicate. The Unwillingness-to-communicate (UC) Scale

(Burgoon, 1976) was used to measure participants' perception of two communication dimensions: Approach-avoidance (UC-AA) and reward (UC-RW). Each dimension consists of 10 items. Participants indicated their degree of agreement with each statement using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7). The responses were summed and averaged for each dimension: $M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.44$, Cronbach $\alpha = .71$ for UC-AA; $M = 2.63$, $SD = 0.42$, Cronbach $\alpha = .80$ for UC-RW.

Internet communication motives. An Internet Communication Motives Scale (Pornsakulvanich, 2010) was used to measure the reasons why people use the Internet for interpersonal communication. The scale contains 26 items on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The statements reflect motivation to use the Internet for information searching and sharing, interpersonal communication, economical, entertainment and passing time, and social networking.

Amount of Internet use. Amount of Internet use was operationalized as the number of minutes specific Internet function (e.g., e-mail, instant messaging/chat rooms) were used daily. The scale was adapted from Pornsakulvanich, Haridakis, and Rubin's (2008) Internet use scale. Participants indicated how many minutes they used each of several

types of Internet functions (i.e., e-mail, instant messaging/chat rooms, blogs/social networking, WWW) both yesterday and on an average day. The responses were summed and averaged to develop an index of the daily amount (in minutes) of each type of use: e-mail ($M = 57.69$, $SD = 102.09$); instant messaging/chat room ($M = 103.73$, $SD = 136.77$); blogs/social networking ($M = 91.80$, $SD = 114.16$); WWW ($M = 102.61$, $SD = 105.50$).

Social well-being. A Social Well-being Scale (Keyes, 1998) was used to measure participant's evaluation of circumstance and functioning in the communities. The scale was adapted to reflect social well-being when participating in online settings. It contains 15 items, tapping 5 dimensions of social well-being: social integration, social acceptance, social contribution, social actualization, and social coherence, with a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7). The responses were summed and averaged for each dimension. Higher scores indicated a greater degree of social well-being. The mean index was 3.19 ($SD = 0.56$, Cronbach $\alpha = .60$).

Satisfaction. Satisfaction was operationalized as the fulfillment of positive communicative expectations in online settings. Hecht's (1978) Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction Inventory was adapted to online settings. It consists of 6 items with a 7-point Likert scale

from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7). The responses were summed and averaged. Higher scores indicated a greater degree of satisfaction. The mean index was 3.05 (SD = 0.56, Cronbach α = .50).

Demographic information. Participants also responded to general demographic information including gender, age, and education.

3. Data Analysis

A descriptive analysis was conducted to analyze the demographic data. Scale reliability analysis was performed to test all measures. A separate hierarchical regression analysis was performed to investigate the contributions of dispositions, Internet communication motives,

and the amount of Internet use in explaining social well-being and satisfaction in RQ1a and RQ1b.

Results

1. Predicting Social Well-being and Satisfaction

Research question 1a asked how dispositions, Internet communication motives, and the amount of Internet use explained social well-being. The predictors were entered in three conceptual blocks based on the U&G theoretical framework, which suggested that dispositions, motives, and Internet use contributed to communication outcomes. After all variables were entered, the final regression accounted for 21% of the variance in social well-being.

Table 1 Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Social Well-Being and Satisfaction (N = 480)

| Predictors | Social Well-being β | Satisfaction β |
|--|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| UC-AA | .08 | .00 |
| UC-R | -.19*** | -.09 |
| Locus of Control | .10* | -.09* |
| Information Searching & Sharing Motive | .16* | .09 |
| Interpersonal Communication Motive | .20*** | .22*** |
| Entertainment & Passing Time Motive | -.04 | -.67 |
| Economical Motive | -.21*** | .05 |
| Social Networking Motive | .06 | .17*** |
| Instant Messaging/Chat Rooms | .07 | -.02 |
| Blog/Social Networking | .00 | .04 |
| E-mail Use | -.05 | -.03 |
| WWW Browsing | -.06 | .02 |
| | $\Delta R^2 = .21***$ | $\Delta R^2 = .17***$ |

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. β = Standardized Coefficients.
The Table shows standardized coefficients of the final regression.

The results showed that internal locus of control ($\beta = .10$, $p < .05$), information searching and sharing motive ($\beta = .16$, $p < .05$), and interpersonal communication motive ($\beta = .20$, $p < .001$) positively predicted social well-being. While UC-RW ($\beta = -.19$, $p < .001$) and economical motive ($\beta = -.21$, $p < .001$) negatively predicted social well-being (see Table 1).

In sum, individual differences and Internet motives contributed to social well-being. Those who were internals or believed that their lives determined by their own actions and those who felt face-to-face

communication to be less rewarding would have a positive social well-being. Moreover, Internet motives including information searching and sharing and interpersonal communication also positively predicted a positive social well-being. People who used Internet to search and share information and to communication interpersonally would feel positive about their functioning and participating in online communities.

Research question 1b asked how dispositions, Internet communication motives, the amount of Internet use contributed to satisfaction. After all variables were entered,

the final regression accounted for 17% of the variance in satisfaction. The results indicated that interpersonal communication motive, ($\beta = .22, p < .001$), social networking motive ($\beta = .17, p < .001$) positively predicted satisfaction. Only locus of control ($\beta = -.09, p < .05$) negatively predicted satisfaction (see Table 1).

In conclusion, both individual differences and Internet motives also predicted communication satisfaction. People who were externals or believed that their lives were shaped by factors beyond their control would feel satisfied with their online communication. Also, Internet motives including interpersonal communication and social networking positively predicted communication satisfaction in that people who used the Internet to fulfill their interpersonal needs and social networking would feel satisfied with their online communication.

Conclusion and Discussion

Mostly, the results of this study supported the main premise of the U&G perspective on the relationships among dispositions, motivation, amount of use, and communication outcomes. All predictors contributed to social well-being and satisfaction in a meaningful way. Among all predictors, locus of control and interpersonal communication motives were the significant contributors of both social well-being and

satisfaction. People who were internals and used the Internet for information searching and sharing and interpersonal communication purposes would have positive social well-being, whereas those who were externals and used the Internet for interpersonal communication and social networking purposes would feel satisfied with their online communication. These results were consistent with past findings showing that internals would use the Internet for instrumental purposes (Hoffman, Novak, & Schlosser, 2003), whereas external would prefer using the Internet for ritualistic purposes (Pornsakulvanich, 2008).

It is reasonable to speculate that people's dispositions and motives are crucial factors to determine the outcomes of using the Internet, particularly social-well-being and satisfaction. The results add on the body of knowledge of the U&G perspective in explaining the Internet and the new media context and also confirm our understanding of the importance of media motivation as Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974) suggesting that motivation influences communication choices, strategies, and behaviors. This study also suggests the notion that those who are internals or believe they can control their own lives would have positive social well-being including social integration, social acceptance, social contribution, social actualization, and social coherence. It is possible to speculate that they tend to use the Internet in a functional way, and are more

committed and engaged in online activities. While those who are externals or think their lives are shaped by other factors would feel satisfied with their online communication. The result is inconsistent with past research conducted in the offline setting showing that externally controlled people were less satisfied with communication (Rubin, 1993). It is plausible to assume that externals may be more comfortable in the online settings. They may feel more controlled on what they want to receive and offer in the online settings in which the offline platforms may not be possible.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy to point out that the amount of use for each function (i.e., instant messaging/chat rooms, blog/social networking, e-mail, and WWW browsing) did not significantly predict social well-being and satisfaction in the present study. The results are inconsistent with previous studies revealing that the amount of use could link to the outcomes of using media such as satisfaction (Pornsakulvanich, Haridakis, & Rubin, 2008), social support (Dumrongsiri & Pornsakulvanich, 2010a; Wright, 2000), and media addiction (Tang, Chen, Yang, Chung, & Lee, 2016). It is possible that time spent on each Internet function may not be significantly enough to predict how people feel about their online usage. However, it is interesting to point out

whether or not the overall time spent online for all functions would provide us more meaningful results like prior studies (Dumrongsiri & Pornsakulvanich, 2010a; Wright, 2000).

Limitation and Future Direction

Although this study was carefully planned and conducted, there was a limitation that should be considered. This study provides the understanding of how the Internet use for interpersonal communication affects people's well-being and satisfaction. However, it is also interesting to know how people use particular Internet functions like social networking sites to communicate with their networks of family and friends for interpersonal and social purposes. In fact, social networking sites help maintain pre-existing social connections and build new online connections (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Thus, examining particular social networking sites (e.g., Facebook and Instagram) would provide us more insights into how social media affect our lives and well-being.

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