



## Fostering the purchasing interest of Gen Z through YouTube marketing communications: The mediating role of brand awareness and brand image

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### Abstract

The development of digital technology in Indonesia has brought significant changes to marketing communication, particularly through social media platforms such as YouTube, which is widely used by Generation Z. This study aims to analyze the effect of YouTube marketing communication on the purchase intention of Generation Z in East Java, with brand awareness and brand image as mediating variables. The research method employed is quantitative, using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) and involving 170 respondents. The results show that YouTube marketing communication has a positive and significant effect on brand awareness and brand image. This finding indicates that exposure to YouTube advertisements strengthens consumers' recognition and positive perception of a brand. However, the study also reveals that YouTube marketing communication does not directly influence purchase intention. Instead, brand awareness and brand image act as key mediating variables linking YouTube marketing communication with purchase intention. Among the two mediating variables, brand image has the most dominant effect on purchase intention. These findings suggest that improving brand awareness and image through strategic YouTube marketing can effectively enhance purchase interest among Generation Z.

## Menumbuhkan minat beli Generasi Z melalui komunikasi pemasaran YouTube: Peran mediasi kesadaran merek dan citra merek

#### Kata kunci :

Kesadaran Merek, Citra Merek, Generasi Z, Niat Pembelian, Komunikasi Pemasaran YouTube.

### Abstrak

Perkembangan teknologi digital di Indonesia telah membawa perubahan signifikan pada komunikasi pemasaran, terutama melalui platform media sosial seperti YouTube, yang banyak digunakan oleh Generasi Z. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh komunikasi pemasaran YouTube terhadap niat beli Generasi Z di Jawa Timur, dengan kesadaran merek dan citra merek sebagai variabel mediasi. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kuantitatif, menggunakan teknik analisis Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) dan melibatkan 170 responden. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi pemasaran YouTube berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kesadaran merek dan citra merek. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa paparan iklan di YouTube memperkuat pengenalan dan persepsi positif konsumen terhadap suatu merek. Namun, penelitian ini juga mengungkapkan bahwa komunikasi pemasaran YouTube tidak secara langsung memengaruhi niat beli. Sebaliknya, kesadaran merek dan citra merek berperan sebagai variabel mediasi utama yang menghubungkan komunikasi pemasaran YouTube dengan niat beli. Di antara kedua variabel mediasi tersebut, citra merek memiliki pengaruh paling dominan terhadap niat beli. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa peningkatan kesadaran merek dan citra merek melalui upaya pemasaran YouTube yang strategis dapat menjadi pendekatan yang efektif untuk meningkatkan minat beli di kalangan Generasi Z.

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The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed the global marketing landscape, including in Indonesia (Böttcher et al., 2024). Changes in consumer behavior in accessing information and making purchases are now heavily influenced by digital media, particularly social media. According to CNN Indonesia data, among the various popular social media platforms in Indonesia, YouTube tops the list, with a usage rate reaching 94% of total internet users, followed by Instagram (93%), TikTok (63%), Facebook (59%), and Twitter (54%). Indonesia has 221 million internet users, of whom 139 million actively use social media daily (Putri et al., 2024).

Compared to text- or image-based media, video ads on YouTube are considered more engaging because they can convey marketing messages through both visual and audio channels, making them more effective in capturing attention and increasing consumer engagement (Handriyotopo, 2025). Demographically, Generation Z, born between the late 1990s and early 2010s, constitutes the largest segment of internet users in Indonesia, accounting for approximately 34.4% of the total population (APJII, 2024). This generation is known to be highly technologically engaged, to seek product information through social media, and to assess brand credibility based on the digital content they consume (Arie Bowo et al., 2024).

Several previous studies have confirmed that social media advertising, including YouTube, plays a significant role in increasing brand awareness and image, which in turn impacts consumer purchase intentions (S. Chen, 2024). However, evolving social media trends indicate a shift in user preferences, with YouTube's popularity declining relative to platforms such as Facebook and TikTok (Vicari & Ditchfield, 2025). This situation indicates that the effectiveness of marketing communications on YouTube needs to be reexamined, particularly in light of the rapidly

changing behavior of younger consumers, such as Generation Z, in their digital media consumption.

Furthermore, although various studies have addressed the effectiveness of YouTube as a digital marketing tool (G. Chen et al., 2023), there remains a research gap regarding the extent to which marketing communications on YouTube directly influence consumer purchase intentions. Most previous studies have focused on indirect influences through intermediary variables such as brand awareness and brand image, without comprehensively analyzing the multiple mediation mechanisms that explain the relationships between these variables. Furthermore, academic attention to the impact of Generation Z's shifting digital preferences on the effectiveness of video-based marketing strategies remains limited (Duffett & Maraule, 2024).

This research builds on digital marketing communications theory, which emphasizes that the effectiveness of social media in influencing consumer behavior is determined not only by message content but also by consumer perceptions of the brand being communicated (Tian et al., 2023). Based on the Hierarchy of Effects Theory (Duwi & Nugroho, 2022) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Taghavi & Maharati, 2024), purchasing decisions occur through cognitive (brand awareness), affective (brand image), and conative (purchase intention) stages. In the context of YouTube, creative, clear, and relevant marketing video content is believed to build awareness and a positive brand image, ultimately increasing consumer purchase intention.

Marketing communications via YouTube, demonstrated by content creativity, message clarity, and topic relevance, are believed to positively influence brand awareness (Izza et al., 2024). The more engaging and informative the video content, the higher the level of consumer recognition and recall of the advertised brand. Dehghani & Tumer (2015) shows that the role of YouTube Ads in increasing brand awareness among YouTube users

*H1: YouTube marketing communications have a positive influence on brand awareness.*

Consistent and engaging advertising exposure on YouTube can strengthen positive brand perceptions. Visually and emotionally conveyed messages form strong associations between the brand and specific values that consumers value (Yastutik & Prapanca, 2024). Previous research also found that YouTube Marketing influences brand image (Febriyanto, 2020).

*H2: YouTube marketing communications have a positive influence on brand image.*

Effective marketing communications not only increase awareness but also drive purchase intention through persuasive and credible messages. When consumers find advertising content on YouTube engaging and useful, their likelihood of purchasing a product increases (Alhabash et al., 2024). YouTube ads are directly related to purchase intention (Febriyanto, 2020).

*H3: YouTube marketing communications have a positive effect on purchase intention.*

Brand awareness is an early stage in the purchase decision-making process. The higher a consumer's awareness of a brand, the more likely they are to consider purchasing it (Hermansyah & Astini, 2024). Brand awareness may have a strong positive influence on customer purchase intentions because customers tend to assign a high quality to products that meet their brand (de Waal Malefyt, 2015).

*H4: Brand awareness has a positive effect on purchase intention.*

A positive brand image reflects consumers' perceptions and experiences of product quality and reliability. Brands with a strong, credible image tend to drive purchase intention by instilling trust and emotional value in consumers (Safika & Masnawi, 2024). Consumers use a strong brand

image to develop their interest in buying the brand (Martha & Febriyanto, 2019).

*H5: Brand image has a positive effect on purchase intention.*

The level of product awareness can increase largely as customers spread positive word-of-mouth praise about the product, which in turn can increase customers' willingness to pay more for the product (Keuschnigg, 2015). Marketing communications on YouTube can indirectly influence purchase intention by increasing brand awareness. Consumers who become familiar with a brand through video ads are more likely to perceive the brand as worthy of purchase.

*H6: Brand awareness mediates the effect of YouTube marketing communications on purchase intention.*

In addition to awareness, brand image also plays an important role as a mediator. Exposure to YouTube advertisements that build a positive image can increase consumer purchase intention for the advertised product. Verdilla & Albari (2018) shows brand image can also be defined as the perception of a brand reflected in brand associations that contain meaning in consumer memory.

*H7: Brand image mediates the effect of YouTube marketing communications on purchase intention.*

Based on these conditions, this study aims to investigate the effect of YouTube marketing communications on consumer purchase intention, with brand awareness and brand image as the mediating variables.

The novelty of this research lies in the application of a dual mediation model that simultaneously links YouTube marketing communications with brand awareness and image in influencing purchase intentions. Furthermore, this study seeks to provide empirical insight into Generation Z's behavior when responding to video-based marketing content on YouTube, thereby serving as a strategic reference for companies to optimize the effectiveness of digital

marketing communications in an increasingly competitive era.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a survey method. The primary objective of the study was to analyze the influence of YouTube marketing communications (X) on purchase intention (Y), with brand awareness ( $Z_1$ ) and brand image ( $Z_2$ ) as mediating variables. The research model was developed based on theoretical studies and empirical findings from relevant previous studies. The quantitative approach was chosen because it allows for objective, measurable, and empirical testing of relationships between variables through inferential statistical analysis. The research instrument used was a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale, designed to measure respondents' perceptions of each research construct.

The population in this study comprised active YouTube users from Generation Z, namely individuals aged 12 to 27 years, residing in East Java Province, Indonesia. This region was selected because East Java is one of Indonesia's centers of industrial, educational, and technological growth, with high levels of internet penetration and social media activity. Because the exact population of YouTube users is unknown, the sample size was determined using the guidelines of Hair et al. (2017), which recommends a sample size of 5 to 10 times the number of research indicators. This study has 25 indicator variables, so the minimum required sample size is 125 respondents. The sampling technique used was purposive non-probability sampling, selecting respondents based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The respondent criteria include:

1. Active YouTube users for at least the past six months.
2. Have watched product advertisements on YouTube.

3. Belong to Generation Z (12–27 years old).
4. Residing in East Java Province.

The data for this study are primary data collected through an online questionnaire using a platform such as Google Forms. The questionnaire consists of two main sections. The first section contains questions about respondents' demographic characteristics (age, gender, education level, and YouTube use frequency). The second section contains statements that measure the research constructs on a 1–5 Likert scale, ranging from "1=strongly disagree" to "5=strongly agree". The research instrument was developed based on indicators from the literature and previous research, and underwent content validity testing by digital marketing experts.

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 3.0 software. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for predictive and exploratory research models and involves latent constructs measured through several indicators.

The analysis process was conducted in two main stages:

### 1. *Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)*

This stage aims to assess the quality of the research instrument, including: Convergent validity testing, using factor loading values ( $>0.7$ ) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ( $>0.5$ ); Discriminant validity testing, using cross-loading values and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT); Construct reliability testing, using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values ( $>0.7$ ).

### 2. *Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)*

This stage aims to examine the relationships among latent variables in accordance with the research hypotheses. The analysis includes:  $R^2$  (coefficient of determination) test to determine the model's strength in explaining endogenous variables;  $f^2$  (effect size) and  $Q^2$  (predictive relevance) tests to assess predictive influence;

Path coefficient and bootstrapping tests to test the significance of direct and indirect influences between variables (through mediation of brand awareness and image).

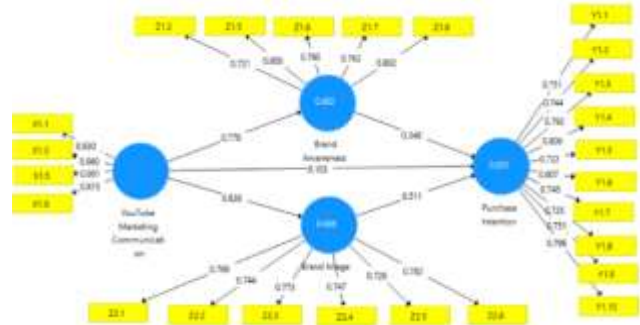
**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**Respondent Characteristics**

Of the 170 respondents who participated in this study, the majority were aged 18-22 years (92.9%), followed by 6.5% aged 23-27 years and 0.6% aged 12-17 years. In terms of educational background, 69.4% were active university students, 12.9% had completed senior high school or vocational education, 8.2% were employed full-time, 3.5% worked part-time, and 5.9% were entrepreneurs. This composition indicates that most respondents are young, academically active, and digitally engaged. Based on cohort theory (Moore, 2012), generational groups are classified by shared experiences that shape similar values, attitudes, and consumption patterns. Therefore, Generation Z, born between the late 1990s and early 2010s, was selected as the study’s focus due to their high purchase intention and strong involvement in digital activities (Said et al., 2023).

**Outer Model Testing Results**

The convergent validity of the measurement model can be evaluated by examining correlations between item or instrument scores and their corresponding construct scores (factor loadings), with the criterion that each factor loading should exceed 0.70. Based on the initial data processing for the variables of YouTube marketing communication, brand awareness, and purchase intention, several instruments were found to be invalid namely, X1.3 (0.663) and X1.4 (0.638) for YouTube marketing communication; Z1.1 (0.684), Z1.3 (0.699), and Z1.4 (0.686) for brand awareness; and Z2.7 (0.659) for brand image. Therefore, all indicators with factor loading values below 0.70 were eliminated from the model.



**Figure 1. Path Analysis**

Source: processed data, 2025

After conducting the second round of data processing by removing the invalid indicators, all remaining indicators in YouTube marketing communication, brand awareness, brand image, and purchase intention showed loading factor values above 0.70. This indicates that all remaining indicators are valid with respect to convergence. Thus, it can be concluded that the measurement model used in this study possesses good convergent validity, and all indicators are appropriate for testing the inner model and the relationships among the latent variables.

**Table 1. Fornell-Larcker Criterion Discriminant Validity**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(1) Brand Awareness	0.770			
(2) Brand Image	0.841	0.757		
(3) Purchase Intention	0.857	0.889	0.756	
(4) YouTube Marketing Communication	0.776	0.828	0.796	0.842

Source: processed data, 2025

Discriminant validity reflects the distinctiveness of a construct and is measured using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). If the HTMT value is below 0.90, the construct is considered to have good discriminant validity.

**Table 2. Composite Reliability and Average Extracted Variance**

	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Brand Awareness	0.828	0.834	0.593
Brand Image	0.851	0.853	0.573
Purchase Intention	0.921	0.922	0.585
YouTube Marketing Communication	0.863	0.865	0.708

Source: processed data, 2025; Note: AVE=Average Variance Extracted, CR=Composite Reliability

Table 2 shows that the composite reliability test results are > 0.7, indicating that all variables are considered reliable.

**Hypothesis Testing**

The following are the results of the hypothesis test conducted using the bootstrapping technique in SmartPLS. The analysis using the bootstrapping technique that was carried out produced a path that was used to test the hypothesis, resulting in the following path analysis:

**Table 3. analysis test results**

Path	$\beta$	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
Brand Awareness → Purchase Intention	0.348	5.123	0.000	Accepted
Brand Image → Purchase Intention	0.511	7.261	0.000	Accepted
YouTube Marketing Communication → Brand Awareness	0.776	25.959	0.000	Accepted
YouTube Marketing Communication → Brand Image	0.828	37.574	0.000	Accepted
YouTube Marketing Communication → Purchase Intention	0.103	1.246	0.213	Rejected

Source: processed data, 2025

The bootstrapping results in Table 3 indicate that YouTube marketing communication has a significant effect on brand awareness (t-statistic = 25.959, p-value = 0.000) and brand image (t-statistic = 37.574, p-value = 0.000), but does not have a direct effect on purchase intention (t-statistic = 1.246, p-value = 0.213). Conversely, brand awareness (t-statistic = 5.123, p-value = 0.000) and brand image (t-statistic = 7.261, p-value = 0.000) significantly influence purchase intention. These findings suggest that YouTube marketing communication is more effective in enhancing brand awareness and brand image, which ultimately drive purchase intention. Therefore, marketers should focus not only on advertising exposure but also on building a positive brand image to strengthen consumers’ purchase decisions.

**R-Square**

According to Musyaffi et al. (2022), the R-Square value is categorized into several criteria: 0.67 indicates a strong influence, 0.33 indicates a moderate influence, and 0.19 indicates a weak influence.

**Table 4. R-Square**

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Brand Awareness	0.602	0.600
Brand Image	0.686	0.684
Purchase Intention	0.835	0.832

Source: processed data, 2025

The R-Square test results show that the effect of brand image on purchase intention is 0.686, indicating a strong influence. The effect of brand awareness on purchase intention is 0.602, which reflects a moderate influence. In addition, the combined effect of brand awareness and YouTube marketing communication on purchase intention is 0.832, indicating a very strong influence. Based on these findings, brand image has the greatest influence on purchase intention, followed by brand awareness and YouTube marketing communication.

**F Square**

**Table 5. F-Square**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(1) Brand Awareness			0.199	
(2) Brand Image			0.340	
(3) Purchase Intention				
(4) YouTube Marketing Communication	1.515	2.184	0.019	

Source: processed data, 2025

Based on the results of the F-Square test, brand awareness has a moderate influence on purchase intention, with an F-Square value of 0.199. Brand image shows a relatively strong influence on purchase intention, with an F-Square value of 0.340. Meanwhile, YouTube marketing communication has only a weak influence on purchase intention, with an F-Square value of 0.019. Nevertheless, a greater influence is observed on brand awareness (F-Square value of 1.515) and brand image (F-Square value of 2.184), indicating a significant impact.

### **The Effect of YouTube Marketing Communications on Brand Awareness**

The results of this study indicate that marketing communications via YouTube have a positive and significant effect on brand awareness, with a t-statistic of 25.959 and a p-value of 0.000. This finding indicates that the more intensive, creative, and relevant the marketing communications strategy implemented via YouTube, the higher the level of consumer brand awareness.

This finding aligns with the concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) proposed by Belch & Belch (2021), which posits that consistent, engaging marketing messages delivered across multiple digital channels can strengthen brand recall and increase brand recognition. In the context of social media, YouTube's strength lies in its visual and audiovisual storytelling, allowing companies to convey messages more deeply and emotionally.

Research from Dinti et al. (2024) confirms that the three main elements of content creativity, message clarity, and topic relevance determine the success of marketing communications on social media, particularly in building brand awareness. Similarly, Yolanda (2024) found that interactivity and source credibility in video marketing significantly increase brand awareness.

In the context of Generation Z, the results of this study indicate that this group is more likely to recognize brands through dynamic visual media, such as YouTube, than through text-based media. This is supported by Duffett & Maraule (2024), who stated that Generation Z has a strong preference for digital content that combines elements of entertainment, education, and authenticity. Therefore, marketing communications through YouTube have proven to be an effective medium for building brand awareness in the interactive digital era.

### **The Effect of YouTube Marketing Communications on Brand Image**

The results of the hypothesis test indicate that marketing communications through YouTube have a positive and significant influence on brand image, with a t-statistic of 37.574 and a p-value of 0.000. This means that the better the quality and consistency of marketing messages delivered through YouTube, the more positive consumers' perceptions of the brand image.

This finding aligns with Adrian et al. (2024) Brand Equity theory, which states that brand image is formed from strong, unique, and favorable associations in consumers' minds. Engagingly delivered video content can create emotional associations and strengthen perceptions of quality, thereby enhancing brand image. These results are consistent with Hajar et al. (2022), which found that intense exposure to video advertising increases brand trust and reliability. Similarly, research by Indah et al. (2025) emphasized that audiovisual experiences on social media can strengthen consumers' emotional connections with brands, create positive perceptions, and increase loyalty.

Practically, these results demonstrate that YouTube functions not only as a promotional channel but also as a means of building brand image oriented toward brand storytelling (Shen & Wang, 2024). Brands that can present authentic, consistent content that aligns with Generation Z values will more easily gain consumer trust and loyalty.

### **The Influence of YouTube Marketing Communications on Purchase Intention**

The analysis results show that YouTube marketing communications do not have a significant direct effect on purchase intention, with a t-statistic of 1.246 and a p-value of 0.213. This suggests that while YouTube advertising can attract attention and increase engagement, its influence on consumer purchase intention is not direct.

This phenomenon aligns with the Hierarchy of Effects theory, which posits that consumers progress through several stages before making a purchase decision: awareness, attitude, and action (Saptaria et al., 2024). Therefore, YouTube marketing communications are more effective in the initial stage, building awareness and positive perceptions of the brand before ultimately generating purchase intention (Rehman et al., 2022).

Research from Putra & Chou (2022) indicates that the influence of social media advertising on purchase intention is indirect, mediated by variables such as brand image and brand trust. In other words, consumers do not necessarily intend to purchase simply because they see an advertisement, but rather because they develop positive perceptions and experiences with the brand. These results indicate that to increase the effectiveness of marketing communications on YouTube, companies need to integrate strategies that not only attract attention but also strengthen trust and brand image, thereby creating a psychological foundation that drives purchase intention (Chen, 2024).

### **The Effect of Brand Awareness on Purchase Intention**

This study found that brand awareness has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention, with a t-statistic of 5.123 and a p-value of 0.000. This means that the higher a consumer's level of recognition and recall of a brand, the greater their likelihood of purchasing the product. Brand awareness is the primary foundation of brand equity that influences consumer behavior (Arie Bowo et al., 2024). Consumers tend to choose brands they recognize because they are perceived as more trustworthy and of reliable quality.

Research by de Waal Malefyt (2015) also shows that brand awareness plays a significant role in driving purchase intention, primarily through increasing perceived quality and reducing purchase

risk. With high awareness, consumers more easily recognize a product among competitors and are more likely to trust the brand's claims (Mala et al., 2025). The implications of this research confirm that companies need to prioritize brand awareness-raising strategies in their digital communications, for example, through recurring video campaigns, collaborations with content creators, and messages that are easily remembered by Generation Z (Andini, 2024).

### **The Influence of Brand Image on Purchase Intention**

The results show that brand image has a positive and significant influence on purchase intention, with a t-statistic of 7.261 and a p-value of 0.000. This confirms that positive perceptions of a brand directly drive consumers' desire to purchase that product. This finding supports the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Tobias-mamina & Maziriri, 2023), which states that a positive attitude toward an object (in this case, a brand) will increase behavioral intention (in this case, purchase intention). A good brand image reflects reliability, emotional appeal, and social relevance, which build consumer trust (Yazid & Kawiryana, 2023). Previous research found that a strong brand image is a dominant factor influencing purchase intention (Agachi & Hasyim, 2024), especially in the Generation Z segment, which is more sensitive to brand identity and symbolic value.

### **CONCLUSION**

Overall, the results of this study strengthen the dual mediation model, where YouTube marketing communications have an indirect effect on purchase intention through increased brand awareness and image. This suggests that the primary strength of video-based digital marketing lies not in persuasive messages that directly trigger purchases, but rather in its ability to build emotional connections, strengthen brand recognition, and foster long-term trust. The results

of this study make important contributions to theory development in digital marketing and consumer behavior, particularly regarding marketing communications on video-based social media platforms such as YouTube. They also provide practical implications for marketing practitioners, digital content developers, and companies utilizing YouTube as a marketing communications medium.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the results. This study used a quantitative survey approach based on the perceptions of Generation Z respondents in East Java Province. Therefore, the results may not be fully generalizable to the entire Generation Z population in Indonesia, which has diverse cultural, social, and economic characteristics. Local factors such as urbanization rates, access to digital technology, and lifestyle can influence social media consumption patterns and brand preferences. This study only analyzes three main variables in the conceptual model: brand awareness and brand image as mediating variables. In complex digital marketing practices, purchase intention can also be influenced by other factors, such as brand trust, customer engagement, eWOM (electronic word of mouth), or perceived value, that are not yet accounted for in this model. Given the highly dynamic nature of digital consumer behavior, future research is recommended to use a longitudinal design to monitor changes in consumer perceptions and purchase intentions over time, particularly when technological innovations, YouTube algorithm changes, or new social trends occur.

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