INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION AS A CORRELATE OF PRODUCTS/SERVICES' PROMOTION. (STUDY OF ETISALAT TELECOMMUNICATION)

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Abstract

The most pressing challenge faced by an organization is the development of a good product or service, its pricing, and making it known and available through effective communication. Contemporary marketing calls for the use of integrated marketing communication (IMC) for the promotion (PRM) of products. This study investigated the relationship between IMC & PRM. The survey study elicited data via a simple but structured questionnaire administered to 54 respondents from Etisalat telecommunication in Lagos. Text books and journals aided the secondary data. Data were analysed by Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) via the use of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Result revealed that IMC has a significant relationship with Promotion. It was therefore recommended among others that organizations should strengthen the relationship between IMC and PRM.

Keywords: *IMC, PRM, Products/Services, Strategy, Customer*

Background to the Study

The aim of every organization is to make its products or services known to potential customers and stand tall amongst her rival competitors. This can only be achieved through effective marketing communication. Marketing communication is the sharing of information between encoder and receiver about the concepts, qualities, and usage of products and services and the organizations that offer them. Marketing communication is like a system that has various parts which work together to form a whole. This whole is Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) hence, the topic for this study.

Clow and Baack (2004) defined integrated marketing communication as the coordination and integration of all marketing tools, avenues and sources within a company at a seamless program that maximizes the impact on consumers and other end users at a minimal cost. There is a need for synergy in integrated marketing communication. The communication elements according to Smith & Jonathan (2010) include selling, Advertising, Sales promotion, Direct marketing, Publicity, (and public relations), Sponsorship, Exhibitions, Packaging, Point- of- sale and merchandising, Word of mouth, E-marketing, and Corporate identity. The coordination of these elements is very critical to achieving a strong and unified brand image and as well as stimulating consumer's patronage.

Most organizations despite the benefit of IMC still pose a serious threat in promoting their products/services. This is as a result of their inability to recognize and exploit the strategic competitive advantage associated with the application of the concept of IMC. High communication budget is a great challenge faced by marketers in promoting their products. According to Low & Mohr (2000) manufactures continue to spend a large amount from their communication budget on sales promotion. They allocate 75% of their marketing communication (MC) budgets to sales promotion (Hellman, 2005).

Marketing decision makers are increasingly aware of the importance of shareholders' wealth maximization which calls for long term effects and constant review of organization performance in relation with product-market and investors' responses. (Amit and Dominique, 2010). Marketing literature to date has focused on the sales or profit response of marketing actions. This is suggestive that the effect of channel structure on product-market response has not been focused. Competition is another challenging variable facing the marketers in promoting their products/services. As companies within the telecommunication industry are operating in a sector with fierce competition, with customers' high bargaining power, the challenge of key strategic communication tools must be tackled. The communication industry is yet to exploit other tools as internet, sponsorship, charitable donations rather than advertising, sales promotion among others.

The above problems gave way to the objective of this study which is to determine the relationship between IMC and the promotion of organizations products/services.

Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were formulated and both in the null form

- 1. Ho: Integrated Marketing Communication has no significant impact on promotion.
- 2. Ho: \There is no relationship between Integrated Marketing Communication and product promotion

Literature review and theoretical framework

This aspect is concerned with reviewing related literature to this study. The purpose of the review is to examine the significant relationship and impact between integrated marketing communication and the promotion of products and services. This will provide the theoretical structure for this research work.

Integrated marketing communication (IMC)

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) has been described as a natural and "inevitable" result of progress in promotional tools and convergence in media (Schultz, Tannenbaum & Lautherborn, 1993). Over the past decade, telecommunication companies have adopted the IMC approach as both a sound practice and a source of added revenue. Product managers instinctively like the idea of a unified product image (Keller, 2001). The cumulative impact and interplay of different communication tools (i.e., "synergy") is not well understood, however this is surprising given the widespread acceptance of the practice and promises of the IMC approach (Ogdan, 1998). The interplay of advertising, sales promotion, publicity, direct marketing, events and sponsorship, personal selling among others to see whether using multiple promotional tools results in synergy is a positive response to a campaign that is greater than the sum of separate expected responses based on use of each communication tool.

Integrated Marketing Communications encompasses general advertising, personal selling, direct marketing, sales promotion, publicity and public relations, events and sponsorships, internet marketing, trade exhibitions etc. Of these elements of IMC, none is inherently superior or inferior; they all have important functions in an integrated campaign. The integrated campaign should focus on a "big idea" and a graphic look that thread through all the elements; the chances that consumers will get the message and then have the message reinforced and layered in their memories without the "cognitive dissonance" that arises from mixed messages or absurd graphic elements are therefore maximized (Shimp, 1997). One of the many reasons behind the adoption of the IMC concept is that using multiple communication tools can be mutually reinforcing, or "synergistic" (Schultz et. al 1993).

The growth of Integrated Marketing Communication

There is a change in the face of today's marketing communications (Rowley, (1998). As mass markets have been fragmented, marketers are shifting away from mass marketing and developing focused marketing programs, designed to build closer relationships with customers in more narrowly defined micro markets. There have been vast improvements in information technology and speeding the movement toward segmented marketing. Today's information technology helps marketers to keep closer track of customer needs; more information about consumers at the individual and household levels is available than ever before (Clow and Baack, 2004). New technologies also provide new communications avenues for reaching smaller customer segments with more tailored messages. The shift from mass marketing to segmented marketing has had a dramatic impact on marketing communications.

Given this new communications environment, marketers must rethink the roles of various media and promotion mix tools. Mass-media advertising has long dominated the promotion mixes of consumer product companies. However, although television, magazines, and other mass media remain very important, their dominance is now declining. The shift from mass marketing to targeted marketing, with its corresponding use of a richer mixture of communication channels and promotion tools, poses a problem for marketers (Witt and Moutinho, 1995). In the consumer's mind, advertising messages from different media such as television, magazines, or online sources blur into one (Kotler, 1997).

Integrating the Marketing Communication Mix

When a company is set for promotion, it must take steps to see that all of the promotion mix elements are smoothly integrated. In integrating the marketing communications tools, companies must analyse trends (internal and external) that can affect your company's ability to do business; look for areas where communications can help the most (Dwyer and Tanner, 2002). In determining the strengths and weaknesses of each communication's function, IMC develops a combination of promotional tactics based on these strengths and weaknesses. Companies must audit the pockets of communications spending throughout the organization. Itemize the communications budgets and tasks and consolidate these into a single budgeting process. Companies must reassess all communications expenditures by product, promotional tool, stage of the life cycle, and observed effect (Pettitt and Brassington, 2000). Companies must identify all contact points for the company and its products.

Integrated Marketing Communication Tools

Integrated marketing communication tools should be designed to support the same overall objectives for a company. This is to avoid the creation of separate messages for each medium without regard for what is expressed through other channels. The most important marketing communication tools within the telecommunication industry are; advertising, direct marketing, personal selling, public relations, sales promotions and trade shows (Smith, 1998). In addition, several other marketing communication tools exist, such as; the Internet, events and sponsorships, packaging, point of purchase, word of mouth and corporate identity.

Advertising

In Nigeria today, Advertising has become very popular for various reasons; it arouses interest, it creates desire to meet an identified needs, it creates awareness of products and services amongst others. Kotler and Armstrong (2010) defined Advertising as any paid form of non personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor. In his opinion, Osuagwu (2002) Advertising consist of all activities involved in presenting to a group a non-personal, oral or visual, openly sponsored message

regarding a product, service or idea. The message is advertisement while the processing is advertising and this message is disseminated via one or more media and is provided for by an identified sponsor.

According to Dwyer and Tanner (2002), advertising is related and begins with a base of creating awareness and strengthening a company's position' or image. It is advertising that makes the companies known. The second role is to create favorable climate for sales people.

Dwyer and Tanner (2002) additionally define mass media advertising as "non-personal, paid announcements by an identified sponsor to reach large audiences, create brand awareness, help position brands, and build brand images". The choice of the medium channel depends on what type of product is offered, target market, and the budget. Middleton and Clarke (2001) define advertising within the telecommunication industry as "one classic communication tool used by marketing managers as part of marketing campaigns to develop awareness, understanding, interest and motivation amongst a targeted audience". Moreover, telecommunication organizations are constantly communicating, whether intentionally or locally, through each personal and non-personal interaction with the public. The ultimate aim is to reach out.

Direct Marketing

According to Shimp (1997); direct mail/direct marketing includes letters, catalogues, price lists, booklets, circulars, newsletters, cards and samples. The advantages of using direct mail/direct marketing is that the audience is highly selective, the message can be personalized, circulation can be limited to what is affordable and it can be used to encourage action/direct response and sales. The disadvantage is that it can be associated with junk mail and that each exposure is expensive. The Internet including web pages and e-mail has advantages for example that a message can be changed quickly and easily, interactivity is possible and the cost are very low.

The disadvantages with Internet are that the visual presentation is limited, an audience is not guaranteed and that "hits" may not represent interest. In addition, a large number of target groups may not use the Internet. According to Witt and Moutinho (1995), direct mail is one of the most important advertising methods for telecomm enterprises, however, hard to obtain right mailing lists and the telecomm industry; previous visitors contain the most important mailing list sources. The primary objective with direct marketing is to achieve more cost-effective use of marketing budgets based on a deep and evolving knowledge of customers and their behaviour, and direct communication with them (Middleton and Clarke, 2001).

Personal Selling

According to Czinkota and Ronkainen (2001), personal selling is the most effective of the communication tools available to the marketer; however, its costs per contact are high. Duncan (2002) defines personal selling as "real-time, two-way personal communication between a salesperson and a prospective buyer and is the most persuasive of all marketing communication methods, to identify buyers' needs to the firm's product offerings, and to allow seller to immediately respond to buyer's questions and objection".

Armstrong and Kotler (2009) defined personal selling as personal presentation by the firm's sales force for the purpose of making sales and building relationship. Personal selling can be used for many purposes such as creating product awareness, generating interest in product, developing product preferences, closing sales and providing post transactional reinforcement Enikanselu (2008).

Public Relation/Corporate Identity

According to Kotler (1997), several tools are used in today's public relations such as product publicity, press relations, corporate communications, and lobbying. Other corporate activities include news conferences, company-sponsored events, open houses, plant tours and donations as well. Duncan (2002) defines public relations as "programs that focus on opinions of significant publics, and manage corporate communication and reputation. In addition, public relations are used to handle relationships with company's diverse publics to create and maintain goodwill, and to observe public opinion and advise top management". All of this leads to good corporate identification.

Middleton and Clarke (2001) stated that to market public relations, product publicity; non paid stories or brand mentions in the mass media can be used, to build credibility and make news announcements as well as to communicate with hard-to-reach audiences. According to Duncan (2002), internal marketing, which is a form of public relations, is of major importance when selling marketing programs to the employees whose support is needed in order to make the program successful.

Sales Promotion

Duncan (2002), states that sales promotion is tangible incentives such as coupons or discounted prices which give a sense of closeness and hence encourage consumer buying behaviour. In addition, sales promotion is techniques primarily designed to stimulate consumer purchasing, dealer and sales-force effectiveness in the short-term, through temporary incentives and displays. Middleton and Clarke (2001), define sales promotion within the telecomm industry "with short-term incentives offered as inducements to purchase, including temporary product augmentation, which covers sales force and distribution network as well as consumers". Furthermore, sales promotions are especially suitable for such short-run demand adjustments and they are vital weapons in the marketing armory of most telecommunication businesses. Moreover, concerning extra products offered is a value added incentive to purchase.

Packaging

Packaging is the container for a product encompassing the physical appearance of the container and including the design, color, shape, labeling and materials used (Arens, 1996). As packaging is the container for a product, physical evidence is an extraordinary incentive packaged in form of services to attract and promote sales. Keller (1998) considers packaging to be an attribute that is not related to the product. He sees it as one of the five elements of the brand-together with the name, the logo and/or graphic symbol, the personality and the slogans. The main use of packaging may be seen as the protector of goods inside and it aids products recognition which consequently enhances consumer's sources of information and patronage. Trade shows can be recognized as periodic gatherings where manufacturers, suppliers, and distributors in a particular industry display their products and provide information to potential buyers, to provide information, demonstrate and sample product, as well as engaging in one-to-one dialogue with current and potential customers (Duncan, 2002). According to Dwyer and Tanner (2002), trade shows are very cost effective, bringing many buyers together with a sales staff, buyers who often have not had any prior contact with the selling firm. Trade shows or exhibitions/shows and workshops play an important role and an alternative form of distribution and display for reaching retail, wholesale and consumer target groups of consumers. Tradeshows, exhibitions or workshops are important alternative forms of distribution and display for reaching retail, wholesale and target groups of consumers. (Middleton and Clarke, 2001).

Internet Marketing

Middleton and Clarke (2001) include web sites and links to other sites in the Internet part. To sell directly to the customer through the Internet, providing customer initiated marketing is known as E-commerce (Duncan, 2002). According to Czinkota and Ronkainen (2001), having a website is seen as necessary for no other reason as building a positive image and lack of it may convey a negative image. The website-should be linked to the overall marketing strategy and not just be there for appearance's sake.

The web page can further act 'as web forum, for customers to exchange news and views on the product, as it will build loyalty among customers. Furthermore, according to Middleton and Clarke (2001), Internet is turning business upside down and inside out.

It is fundamentally changing the way that companies operate and the most profound development in telecomm in the last decade has been the impact of change in the capabilities and potential of the internet. If it is too soon to be certain to what extent the internet will dominate telecoms marketing, it is at least clear that its impact will be a major influence on nearly every aspect of services marketing.

Events and Sponsorship

According to Dwyer and Tanner (2002), events and sponsorships are highly targeted brand association that personally involves prospects, to help position a brand by associating it with certain causes of activities. Furthermore, Smith (1998) defines sponsorship as "a kind of promotion where a product or a company is associates with an entity, event or activity. In exchange for its contribution the sponsor is hoping to be exposed in the media coverage". According to Middleton and Clarke (2001) sponsorship is big business, used to attract potential sponsors by producing appropriate packages, achieving increased business through improves awareness that public relation coverage brings. Finding examples of sponsorships is not hard today since every sports team, music concert, and cultural program is using sponsorship as a way to finance their activities. The sponsoring company is of course hoping to get some good publicity out of sponsoring but problems may occur for the company if the activities they are sponsoring are failing or turning out in a less favourable way.

Point of Purchase

Duncan (2002) defines point of purchase as "displays in the interior of stores where a product is sold, to serve as a brand reminder and motivate trial and extra purchases". Middleton and Clarke (2001), define point of purchase materials as "point of sale displays and merchandising within the telecomm industry". In addition, posters, window dressing, displays of brochures and other materials both of a regular and temporary incentive kind are included as well. Moreover, point of purchase is designed to stimulate consumer purchasing and dealer.

Word of Mouth

Word of mouth is seen as the most potential one-to-one communication in the communication mix. A company can help the creation and spread of word of mouth. When a company is facing bad publicity and maybe also decreasing sales, publicity stunts, clever mailings, creative promotions, and challenging advertising can efficiently help turn this trend around. According to Smith (1998), people talk about organizations, their products, services, and staff. Companies and their offerings are often sources of conversation, whether it is a complaint or praise, and today it is not only the products or services that are discussed but also their promotional efforts, such as television advertisements, special offers, and publicity stunts.

Strategies of Integrated Marketing Communication

A strategic communication plan is one of the key elements in IMC. It allows marketers to build a synchronized communication strategy that reaches every market segment with a single, unified message (Percy, 1997).

The objectives of any promotional strategy can be drawn from an appropriate mixture of the roles of promotion; to increase sales, maintain or improve market share, create or improve brand recognition, create a favourable climate for future sales, inform and educate the market, create a competitive advantage relative to competitor's products or market position and to improve promotional efficiency. In this section two different communication strategy models are presented. The first model is Stages in Designing Communication Strategies introduced by Rowley (1998) and the second model is Steps in Formulating Marketing Communication Strategy by Czinkota and Ronkainen (2001). IMC involves identifying the target audience and shaping a well-coordinated promotional program to elicit the desired audience response. Too often, marketing communications focus on overcoming immediate awareness, image, or preference problems in the target market. However, many organizations are interested in maintaining awareness and positive attitude to their product or service as well. Because customers differ, communications programs need to be developed for specific segments, niches, and even individuals.

Stages in Designing Marketing Communication

The various stages in designing marketing communication are:

- i. Identification of the target market
- ii. Determine the desired response
- iii. Design the message
- iv. Select communication channel-personal & non personal establish communication budget
- v. Decide on the promotional mix
- vi. Measure promotional results

Integrated Marketing Communication as It Affects Promotion

Marketing practitioners and advertising firms have increasingly embraced an integrated marketing communications (IMC) approach to their promotional efforts in order to achieve direct effects of the individual communication tool used, as well as an additional "synergistic" effect from the combination of communications tools used. Ogdan (1998) demonstrated that among a set of stimuli, individuals give the most attention to those that are both complex and familiar, or both simple and novel. They give less attention to stimuli that are both complex and novel or both familiar and simple. Repeating a theme throughout an IMC campaign increases familiarity, and using multiple tools to embody the theme in different ways increases complexity. The net result is the promise of IMC campaigns to break through media clutter and gain more attention from customers. Attention acts as a mediator for the effect of integrated marketing communication; therefore expect attention to be greater for synergistic combinations (e.g., a prim news story and a radio ad), resulting into an improved promotion of products and services (Clow and Baack, 2004). There are several reasons to expect a multiple-communication tool, multiple-media campaign to have a more positive effect than any single-tool, single-medium campaign (Gonring, 2001). Encoding variability submits that multiple media can activate a larger memory network and reduce encoding problems due to the increased resources made available through the use of multiple channels (Percy, 1997). Repetition and variety will aid encoding and improve promotion toward multiple exposures and, therefore, receptiveness. Through the use of synergy, repetition and variety in the practice of IMC, there will be an increased attention, resulting in a more elaboration and improved promotion of products and services (Schultz, et al., 1993).

Methodology

The study was a survey research type that made use of both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data were gotten from marketing staff of Etisalat telecommunication in Lagos, while text books and journals aided the secondary sources of information.

The total population of the Etisalat staff was given as 268 (Telecoms firms' record, 2013). Marketing staff workers for which this study made use of were 63 and 54 respondents determined by Yamane method without any biases using 5% as error margin.

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N
n=

1+Ne2
Where n= sample size desired
e= desired margin of error
N= population size
The sample error is 0.05%
N=63
e=0.05
63
n= 1+63(0.05)2

63
n=

1+63(0.025)
63
n=

1+63(0.025)
63
n=

1+575
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54 questionnaires were administered and 100% retrieval was experienced. The questions were well structured and simple, related accordingly to the topic Integrated Marketing Communication as it affects sales and consumer patronage. 3 point liker scale was used to measure the strength of feeling from the respondents as; strongly agree (3), agree (2), strongly disagree agree (1). Two sets of questionnaires; part A centered on respondents bio- data while part B questions dealt with the subject matter (IMC) and for the hypotheses validation. Numbers 1 & 2 of the questions was the emphases for the hypotheses testing. Simple linear regression was used to determine how IMC as independent variable has affected promotion-dependent variable using economic criteria and statistical criteria to ascertain the prediction power of the model. T- test statistics was used to test the individual statistical significance of the independents variable on the dependent variables. R-Coefficient of determinations was used to measure the relationship that exists between the two variables.

Apriori expectation

 β o >0, β 1>0 The A priori expectation expecting our result to a positive relationship between IMC and Promotion of product and services; the negativity of our slope coefficient (β 1)can showcase this.

Result and discussion

Table 1: The integrated use of promotional tools has an effect on informing, persuading and reminding customers on products and services.

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SD	2	3.7	3.7	3.7
Α	21	38.9	38.9	42.6
SA	31	57.4	57.4	100.0
Total	54	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2013

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From the above table 1 respondents (57.4%) strongly agreed that when promotional tools are used in an integrated form, it will promote products, while 21 (38.9%) respondents and 2 (3.7) respondents answered agreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

Table 2: The promotional tools are efficient and effective when they are used collectively

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SD	6	11.1	11.1	11.1
Α	24	44.4	44.4	55.6
SA	24	44.4	44.4	100.0
Total	54	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey 2013

In the table above 2 respondents (11.1%) strongly disagreed, 24 (44.4%) respondents agreed and 24 (44.4%) respondents strongly agreed on the basis that when promotional tools are collectively used they are more effective and efficient.

Result on Regression Analysis

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.715ª	.540	.519	.67969

Table 4: Coefficient A

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standrardized Coefficients		
Model	В	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1 (Constant) IMC	4.283	.471		9.090	.000
	.102	.115	0.15	3.107	.915

The Coefficient

Substituting the Coefficients in model

The regression line will be

PRM=4.283+1.02IMC

The result presented above shows that the coefficients of the autonomous intercept $(\beta 0)$ and the coefficient of the IMC are positively signed. This shows that increasing IMC has attendant positive impact on promotion.

The T statistics

The t-statistics shows that IMC has significant impact on PRM. As shown in the regression result above, the t statistic for IMC is 3.107.

Decision Rule

With respect to the respective explanatory variables, if:

Tcal>Ttab, it is statistically significant, thus, H1 should be accepted, and H0 should be rejected.

Tcal < Ttab, it is statistically significant, thus, H1 should be rejected, and H0 should be accepted.

Our Ttab is T530.05 = 1.671

Since Tca

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Decision l>Ttab, we accept H1 and reject Ho i.e we accept our alternative hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis, which states that integrated marketing communication (IMC) has significant effect on promotion (PRM).

Hypothesis two testing

Ho: There is no relationship between Integrated Marketing Communication and Promotion.

Using our correlation coefficient R to test for the degree of relationship that exists between IMC and PRM.

Decision rule

The range of R is 0 < R < 1, therefore, if R is greater than zero and above 0.5, we assert that there exists a strong and positive relationship between IMC and PRM, we then accept alternative hypothesis (H1) and reject the null hypothesis (H0), but if R is less than zero, and below 0.5, we conclude that there exists a negative relationship between the two variables, we do otherwise.

Decision

Since our R is 0.715, we agreed therefore that there is a relationship between IMC & PRM, based on this, we then accept H1 which means there is relationship between IMC and PRM.

 $The\,R\,and\,adjusted\,R2$

The line of fit of the model is good at 0.541 and the R2 shows that the model is able to explain 54.1% of the changes in promotion and the remaining 45.9% that accounts for the unexplained variations can be attributed to other factors not included in our model, Factors such as location, competition, culture, financial structures, literacy level of customers, political and legal environment etc.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Integrated Marketing Communication has significant effect on the promotion of goods and services as was deduced from the analysis. There is an established relationship between Integrated Marketing communication and products / service promotions.

Most organizations are still adopting the few major communication tools as advertising, sales promotion and personal selling.

It was found that despite the benefits of IMC, some companies are yet to find their fit adopting the IMC as listed by Smith & Jonathan. Most communication budget is so high and not properly managed, consequently affecting profitability and sustainability.

There is high rate of competition amongst the communication companies encouraging customers' high bargaining power.

The following recommendations were made based on the findings from the study:

Organisations should strengthen the relationship between Integrated Marketing Communication and Promotion. This will be achievable when all the communication tools are adopted with adequate strategy. There should be staff training on communication and promotional strategies to enhance performance and profitability. Appropriate and decisive re-engineering of communication and promotional strategy components is recommended. Effective monitoring of each of the components in relation to the marketing objectives set should be harnessed.

Environmental scanning should be imbibed to bench mark competitors. Sales promotion in form of gifts, corporate social responsibilities, donations etc should be encouraged such as to stimulate higher sales, maintain good corporate image and customer loyalty and expansion of market shares.

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