

Exploratory Study of Nigeria International Book Fair

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ABSTRACT

The study "Exploratory study of Nigeria International Book Fair" the analysis here is based on the response from the structured interviewed from the attendees based on the set objectives. This analysis here is therefore based on the expressed opinions of the attendees and is examined under the following set of objectives: identification of objectives for attending the international book fair, Identify the expected benefits for attending the international book fair, Find out the market strategies employed to create awareness of the published titles, Identify challenges experienced in the International book fair, Identify recommendations suggested for overcoming the challenges. The study adopted a qualitative approach and was based strictly on the information obtained from the attendees from the structured questionnaire issued to them after the fair. A total of twenty four respondents were involved in the study. The information collected were analyzed in frequencies and percentages and partly in qualitative formats.

INTRODUCTION

Professional book fairs play a vital role in publishing. According to Abdullahi, I.M. and Olowu, L.T. (2015), they allow publishers, agents, distributors and retailers to meet and do business. They draw media and public attention to the book industry. They provide platforms for authors to meet their public. They are publishing's key stimulant. Book fairs come in all shapes and sizes, attracting a variety of publics and serving different purposes. Most book fairs in developing countries and many major fairs in developed countries are mainly consumer events.

They further stated that the major function of International books fairs is to be a market place for trade professionals. Book rights are bought and sold, and agents introduce new titles to publishers. Generally, the people selling book rights at book fairs are located either on publishers' stands or in a special rights Centre, while the buyers move around the fair from meeting to meeting. Book rights are offered via different models, either on an exclusive basis to the potential buyer, or simultaneously to multiple buyers, or via auctions. A few deals may be hatched and signed at book fairs. But more frequently, deals are concluded which were already being discussed prior to a fair, or new

deals are initiated that are followed up after the event. The book fair is essentially a catalyst which accelerates rights deals towards completion.

A book fair is also an exhibition Publishing companies as well as firms from the wider publishing industry (E.g. distributors, technology companies) use fairs as showcases for their brands and as shop windows for their products and services. Book fairs serve an important educational purpose for book trade professionals, making them aware of key trends through seminars, panel discussions and presentations. Book fairs also offer a range of events designed to facilitate networking.

Many book fairs are geared towards attracting large numbers of the general public. These fairs represent an important sales and or marketing and communications platform for publishers. Authors participate in public events and visitors are often able to buy books at special discounts.

Some fairs exclusively allow trade attendees, some are designed for the general public, and others are hybrids, often separating their fair into professional and public days. In Frankfurt, for instance, the first three days are trade days while the public attends on the final two days.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF NIGERIA INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR

The Nigerian International Book Fair (NIBF) came into existence in 1991, propelled by the urge to save the Book from going into extinction in Nigeria. The founding fathers had observed the crisis facing the book industry in Nigeria and the often counter-productive fire-brigade methods adopted as remedial measures. They had come to the conclusion that the crisis stood little chance of resolution without the emergence of a nongovernmental, non-profit organization committed to indigenous book development that would bring together key practitioners of the industry and adopt a holistic approach to indigenous book development. Imbued with abundant zeal, the NIBF achieved paper existence in 1991. The year 1992 saw the unqualified failure of the Foundation's attempt to launch a ₦100 million endowment fund. The Board of Directors of the Foundation ceased to exist after four futile attempts to form a quorum of three members! The tide turned in 1993 when the President of the Foundation received a grant as seed money. Immediate and judicious investment of the entire amount enabled the Foundation to commence skeletal activities in 1993 and full operation in 1994. A resurgence of interest in the Foundation followed when it seemed set to succeed.

THE ORGANIZER AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

With no local or foreign models to copy, the NIBF had no option other than to fashion its own administrative structure in order to enable it to function with optimum results.

A Board of Trustees was constituted in place of the defunct Board of Directors, to exercise general superintendence over the policies, finances, and physical assets of the Foundation, to raise additional funds, to ensure proper keeping of books of accounts, to fill any vacancy in the Office of the President, and to authorize the use of the Common Seal of the Foundation. The initial eleven-member Board, appointed as individuals rather than as representatives of associations, reflected Nigerian federal character and ethnic and religious plurality. It made available to the NBF men and women who distinguished themselves in authorship, bookselling, publishing, printing, law, public service or in business/banking/industrial management.

The second key organ of the Foundation is the National Advisory Council which, as the professi-

onal arm of the Foundation, identifies and prioritizes projects and activities in which intervention by the Foundation would be desirable and in the interest of indigenous book development. The Council is also required to offer professional advice to the Foundation on the Foundation's annual programme and activities, as well as on other matters referred to it, in order to ensure relevance, timeliness, and effectiveness.

The membership of the Council earns the Foundation the appellation of apex- or umbrella organization for book development in Nigeria. The Presidents of the five major professional associations in the book industry--Authors, Publishers, Printers, Booksellers, and Librarians--are members of the Council *ex officio*. So are the National Librarian and the President of the Foundation. The two Honorable Ministers whose ministries relate closely with book development--Culture and Education--nominate a representative each to the Council. Four organizations relevant to book development, as may be determined by the Board of Trustees, also nominate a representative each to the Council, for a two-year term. The organizations are subject to review. The current members are the Raw Materials Research & Development Council, (RMRDC) the Nigerian Educational Research & Development Council, (NERDC) the Academic Staff Union of Universities, (ASUU) and the Nigeria Union of Teachers. (NUT) Three persons are appointed to the Council on merit for a two year term. As soon as they resolved the problem of funding, the National Advisory Council was meeting frequently, to enable it to respond promptly to major developments affecting national book development, and to propose lines of action for the Foundation and the entire book community.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES OF THE BOOK FAIR

Nigeria International Book Fair

The Annual National Book Week, inaugurated by the NBF in April 1994 and usually held in the second half of April, metamorphosed into the Nigeria International Book Fair (NIBF) in May 2002. The NBF is a founding Trustee of the Nigerian Book Fair Trust (NBFT), which organizes the fair, and participates in its activities.

Book Data Centre

The NBF Book Data Centre was established in 1995 to serve as a data bank on book related matters. The maiden edition of the Directory of Nigerian Book Development, edited by Chukwuemeka Ike and published in 1998, was

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the first publication of directories of Nigerian published Authors, Publishing Houses, Book Printers, Book Selling and Distribution Organizations, and Libraries. Inadequate funding has hampered the work of the Centre.

Promotion of Reading

Funded by Heinrich Boll Foundation of Germany, the NBF operated pilot reading promotion projects (1996 and 1997) and a three-year (1998-2000) programme to promote the reading habit among Nigerians. Operating through three Reading Promotion Units in Ibadan (West), Jos (North), and Ndikelionwu (East), the NBF organized three-day holistic reading promotion events in urban and rural centers in eighteen States of the Federation between 1998 and 2000. The NBF handed over the mobile library set up at Ibadan as part of the programme to the Oyo State Library Board in 2002 at the request of the Board, which transformed it into Bodija Community Library, Bodija-Ibadan. The NBF has the capacity to mount new reading promotion programmes as funds become available.

Book Aid Nigeria (BAN) Project

As a follow-up to the NBF/Heinrich Boll Foundation Reading Promotion Programme, which expired in December 2000, the NBF launched a Book Aid Nigeria (BAN) Project aimed at receiving free donations of a wide range of new books for distribution to public, institutional, community, and other libraries, organizations, and (in approved cases) individuals, to facilitate access to books. The first container of imported books for the project came from International Book Bank, Inc., Baltimore, U.S.A. Three Nigerian publishers--Macmillan, Longman Nigeria, and University Press Plc.--also donated books.

A three-year project with the Sabre Foundation, Massachusetts, USA, has enabled the NBF to receive and distribute two consignments of books from the USA annually. A grant from the Education Tax Fund (ETF) has facilitated the acquisition of an NBF warehouse for the project. The NBF welcomes more book donations and funds for the purchase of books to meet the ever growing demand for books for formal education and informal lifelong education.

Sourcing and Dissemination of Indigenous Knowledge

Through organized interviews with identified experts (literate and illiterate) in indigenous knowledge, the NBF has sourced hitherto unpublished information, which it transformed

into reading materials for the reading public. Seven Igbo language booklets have been produced. Inadequate funds have held back quality publication of the booklets as well as expansion of the scope of the Project to other Nigerian language groups.

National Book Distribution Organization

The NBF is playing a catalytic role in attempting to establish a National Book Distribution Organization to meet the recognized, top-priority need of the Nigerian book sector.

Publications

With funds from Heinrich Boll Foundation of Germany, the NBF published the following books in its first decade of existence: Making Books Readily Available and Affordable (edited by Ezenwa-Ohaeto), 1995; Creating a Conducive Environment for Book Publishing (edited by Chukwuemeka Ike), 1996; Meeting the Needs of the Rural Family (edited by Chukwuemeka Ike), 1997; Directory of Nigerian Book Development (edited by Chukwuemeka Ike), 1998; The Book in 21st-Century Nigeria (edited by Chukwuemeka Ike), 2000; Creating and Sustaining a Reading Culture (edited by Chukwuemeka Ike), 2000. Academy Press Plc., Lagos, subsidized the cost of printing the Directory. Funding is required to update the Directory and publish new books.

Resource Centre

With books kindly donated by Book Aid International and furniture provided by the Heinrich Boll Foundation, the Foundation has equipped a modest Resource Centre for the staff of the Foundation and for outsiders. It is envisaged that, subject to the availability of funds, the Centre will be upgraded to a Research and Training Centre.

MAIN BOOK FAIRS IN THE WORLD

Frankfurt Book Fair has established itself as the biggest international trade book fair. It is a key market place for the rights business and thanks to its wide media coverage, a platform for publishers to announce deals. Other important fairs for rights sales include London (the largest spring fair), Bologna (specialized in children's literature) and Book- Expo America (the main market place for US publishers). Liber (in Spain) and Guadalajara (in Mexico) are the main rights fairs for Spanish-language publishers, while Beijing, Hong Kong and Taipei are important rights fairs for the Chinese market, as is Moscow for Russian publishing.

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In the Middle East, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah and Dubai are growing hubs for rights sales. The Salon du livre de Paris, Sweden's Goteborg Book Fair, Bogota and the Buenos Aires fair are high profile cultural events and major drivers of their national book industries. Cairo and Tehran are the Middle East's largest public fairs while Bangkok, Calcutta and Delhi attract millions of visitors. The South African Book Fair are well attended by both trade and public.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study was:

- Identification of objectives for attending the Nigeria International book fair
- Identify the expected benefits for attending the Nigeria International book fair
- Find out the marketing strategies employed to create awareness of the published titles
- Identify challenges experienced in the Nigeria International book fair
- Identify recommendations suggested for overcoming the challenges

RESEARCH METHODS

The study adopted the qualitative approach and was based strictly on the information obtained from the attendees from the structured questionnaire issued to them during the fair in 2016. A total of twenty four respondents were involved in the study. The information collected was analyzed partly in frequencies and percentages and partly in qualitative formats.

FINDINGS

Identification of Attendee's Objectives for Attending the Nigeria International Book Fair

All the respondents were of the view that they attended for multidimensional purposes among which was to meet and interact with others of their orientation and show case their published titles toward creation of awareness of their publishing companies along with sales promotion of their products. The groups of attendees constituted the bulk of the respondents and accounted for 92.6% of the respondents. But relatively few numbers of the attendees were of the view that they came for exploiting the prospect of establishing contact and establishing consultancy among publishers and librarians. Along this line were others who said their purpose of attending the fair was to facilitate admission of prospective students to foreign countries' tertiary institutions. Some relatively few numbers of the attendants

were of the view that they attended the fair towards the promotion of reading culture in the society.

Identification of Attendees' Expected Benefits for Attending the International Book Fair

Most of the respondents were of the view that their attendance of the book fair enables them to make sales and establish personal contact with prospective buyers of their published titles. But some of the respondents were of the view that it was an avenue for them to attend seminars and workshop on book culture. For those who have the mission of recruiting student for admission into foreign schools, the fair was said to have afforded them the opportunity to liaise with some prospective student and create awareness of their organization. Generally, attendees were of the view that the book fair offered them the opportunity to reach their target audience and build contact and showcase their products. Apart from making sales, the attendees were of the view that fair gave the opportunity to interact and change ideas with other publishers. Some of the attendees were of the view that, they were able to open new channels of distribution and gain new customers.

Market Strategies Employed to Create Awareness on Published Titles

Among the market strategies adopted for the creation of awareness of the products by the publisher and attendees of the book fair were banners, flyers, bill boards, posters, exchange of catalogues, gift items and discounted price of published titles and products. There were strategies of open display and exhibition of materials. But some of the respondents were of the view that they employed adverts through news media like radio and newspapers while some used social media like Face book in the promotion of the products. Some of the respondents were of the view that they visit schools to exhibit their title and go along with gifts and flyers they provide for prospective buyers of their products. Some relatively few respondents were of the view that they collected personal contact address from the prospective customers.

Challenges Experienced in the Nigeria International Book Fair

Challenges experienced by the attendants could be classified into two dimensions. The first is those associated with organization of the fair and its inherent challenges. The second is external and

related to personal challenges encountered in the process and passage conveyors of the published titles and products to the venue of the fair.

In the first instance, there was the problem of turnout of the attendants at the fair which all the respondents were of the view was inadequate. The low turnout was associated with the poor reading culture of the Nigerian society. Some of respondents were of the view that the venue was too small for book fair. Apart from the side of the venue, some complaint of the security and absence of close circuit television (CCTV) for effective security monitor of the venue. Then there was the advertisement of the book fair which some of the respondents were of the view was very poor and resulted to low sales of products and published titles.

Most attendees were of the view that there is generally poor reading culture and that its affect patronage of their product resulting in poor sales. Coupled with this is the general complain of the poor nature of the economy and cost of fueling which was said to be too high. There was the problem of importation of materials which some of the respondents complained hampered the effectiveness of the book fair. Some of the attendees were of the view that the standard of book fair was very poor and furniture used were not up to standard. Another challenge is that of high price products due to the poor nature of economy. Some of the respondents were of the view that the cost of renting a stand was too high and hardly affordable the face of low patronage experienced in the fair.

Closely related is the issue of importation: the challenges suffered by prospective attendees of the book fair who complained that they could hardly convey their ware through the borders because of customs restrictions. Along with problem in the foreign exchange rate which make the price of such foreign book to be very high.

Other Challenges confronting the Nigerian Book Industry in General

The problems of the book industry in Nigeria are quite numerous. These range from inadequate raw materials, low capacity utilization of the established paper mills, shortage of locally authored books (especially for the tertiary levels of our education system) to piracy and distribution network. While it is not possible to exhaustively discuss every problem of the book industry within the confines of a single paper, suffice it to say that attempts are made below to highlight the most obvious of these problems.

Inadequate funding has been the Foundation's most serious handicap since its inception. The annual income that the Foundation derives from its investment of the entire initial seed money received from the Federal Government is barely adequate to keep the Foundation alive with minimal staff, making it impossible to engage in meaningful activities projects without external funding. All the activities listed above, were funded by external donor agencies. Other worthy activities projects conceptualized by the Foundation could not take off because of lack of funds and donor support.

The greatest problem facing the book industry in Nigeria is that while some other industries do manage to source their raw materials locally and thus do not have to pay exorbitantly to purchase foreign exchange for imports, the book industry depends almost entirely on imported raw materials. Printing materials such as ink, film, plates and paper to mention just the obvious ones are all imported at highly prohibitive foreign exchange (dollar) rates.

It is probably with a view to alleviating the problem of printing paper for the book industry that three paper mills were established in the country. The Nigerian Paper Mills Ltd. Jebba is designed to manufacture paper for printing books; the Nigerian Newsprint Manufacturing Company Ltd. Iko-Iboku is meant to produce newsprint for publishing newspapers and magazines while the Nigerian National Paper Manufacturing Company Ltd. Iwopin is designed to produce pulp paper. Unfortunately, none of these paper mills is producing at even half of the installed capacity, and this has thus aggravated rather than ameliorated the problems of the Nigerian book industry.

There is lopsided development of the book industry in Nigeria in the sense that publishers pay more attention to primary and secondary school textbooks (especially in the sciences) and books of general interest including fiction have consequently suffered great neglect. While it is important for publishers to think of making profits, "the role of the book industry in national development goes beyond enriching the proprietors of the industry and meeting the obvious need for suitable textbooks for the formal school system" (Ike 1995). This lopsided nature of development in the book industry can be checked if a body to co-ordinate book development in Nigeria is established and given the necessary tools and powers to effectively carryout its assignment.

There is also the problem of publishers' attitude to manuscripts submitted. The attitude can best be described as lackadaisical and nonchalant. Publishers are not even honest enough in the payment of royalties to authors. It also takes a very long time to get a manuscript published but even the published books are not readily available to the consumer. In the words of Emenyonu (1995), "publishing companies in Nigeria seem to find it prestigious and a sign of distinction to assert that they can only meet "one third or less of your order". It is not enough to publish books; such books should reach the consumers. One however agrees that due to dwindling finance, which has affected all sectors of the Nigerian economy, sales representatives of publishing companies are hardly in existence unlike what used to obtain before. There is thus the problem of effective book distribution mechanism in Nigeria.

Due to the high cost of publishing books, prices have astronomically risen beyond the reach of many parents/guardians. It is therefore common to see some pupils/students going through the educational system without having the prescribed minimum textbooks. The school libraries that are to come to the aid of the students are themselves poorly equipped with outdated books and few or no journals at all. What is now the fashion in many educational institutions (especially in tertiary ones) is the preponderance of handouts prepared by teachers who themselves depend on outdated textbooks or lecture notes they used during their student days. What all these mean is low quality of education passed on to students.

It is obvious that the Nigerian government has invested greatly in the educational sector. This is especially so when one takes into account billions of naira that are used annually in payment of salaries to all those in the educational sector, but hardly is any amount allocated to the book industry per se. The seeming interest of government in tackling the problems of the book industry is however reflected in the numerous conferences, seminars, workshops, task forces and commissioned studies, among other fora, the government has either organized or assisted to organize to discuss and proffer solutions to the perennial problems of the book industry. Asein (1993:76-7) lists some of these fora as:

- Commonwealth Regional Seminar on Book Development;
- Ministerial Task Force on Scarcity of Books and stationery;

- National seminar on reducing the cost of Textbooks in Nigeria;
- World Bank/Overseas Development Agency Book Sector Study;
- Committee on the Rationalization of Textbooks in Primary and Secondary Schools;
- Federal Ministry of Education/British Council Sponsored Conference to criticize the World Bank/ ODA Book Sector Study;
- Seminar on Book Development and Reading in the ECOWAS sub-region; NERDC Draft National Book Policy Committee;
- Ministerial Committee on the provision of Book to Colleges and schools;
- Task Force on Books.

To (his long list, Adesanoye (1995:156) adds "the 1973 Ife Conference on publishing and Book Development, and the 1983 First Nigerian National Congress on Books", held in Lagos. Similarly, the introduction to the final draft of the National Book policy (which was submitted to government since 1992) clearly states that: The Nigerian Government recognizes the place of book as:

- The hub of the educational wheel and potent agent in the overall development of its citizenry;
- A basic instrument for the preservation and transmission of cultural heritage and for the development of scientific and technological knowledge or skills, socio political and economic awareness;
- An instrument for enhancing national interaction, co-operation and understanding and
- An agent for promoting the growth of well informed and well-adjusted individuals.

If government recognized the importance of book in national development, one however wonders the sincerity of government in really tackling the problems of the book industry. Moreover, as of yet, there is no official government policy that addresses the book sector. It is even disheartening that a Draft National Book Policy submitted to government over six years ago is yet to be enacted into law.

Recommendation for Overcoming Challenges in the Nigeria Book Fair

Foremost in the recommendation for overcoming the challenges is the issue of promotion and effective advertisement of book fair. Toward this end, all the respondents were of the view that successive fairs require adequate advertisement

and government intervention to help source the funding for such venue and activities of the fair. Thus, they suggested that subsequently, there should be more intensive publicity of book fair such that such information will reach target audience in the Nigerian society and the cost of renting a stand should be reduced. Most respondents were of view that information on book fair should be published in advanced for participants to be ready and prepare for it rather than sudden approach use for the current one.

Issue of security is another challenge that some of the attendees raised and suggested it could be addressed with the provision of CCTV and government security agents for subsequent venues of book fair in the country. The respondents suggested that standard furniture should be provided in line with international standard.

Some respondents were of the view that there should be a periodical local book fair towards promotion of the reading culture in the country. Some of the respondents suggested that government could aid in this direction by promoting reading culture among children through encouraging such ventures in terms of funding and public enlightenment.

Some of the respondents were of the view that the federal government needs to be involved in book fair preparation such that the issue of custom and other such formalities could be solved for prospective participants and easy passage of published titles into such book fairs.

- More attention should be paid to the book industry rather than merely regarding it as part and parcel of the entire educational sector. The three established paper mills should be reactivated, if necessary, privatized so that they can have the required financial capital to operate optimally. Now that government is thinking of privatizing some of its key companies/parastatals to make them efficient and self-sustaining, this recommendation is therefore in order.
- Government should also commission research projects by appropriate research institutes and universities whose research outcomes can lead to the local production of some of the requirements of the printing and publishing industry in Nigeria. This will reduce the cost of book production and thus eventually reduce the unit price of textbooks thereby making it possible for more pupils/students to purchase the recommended textbooks for students.
- Nigeria has quite a good number of educated people who can write books to meet the educational book needs of all the levels of our educational system. In order to further encourage the authorship of educational books, awards should be instituted for academic publishing. Professional bodies such as Association of National Accountants of Nigeria (ANAN); Nigerian Institute of Bankers; Science Teachers Association of Nigeria (STAN) and Nigerian Academy of Education (NAE), to mention just a few, should endeavor to author textbooks, particularly for the tertiary level.
- Creative writing courses should also be introduced and taught in the universities, mainly by practicing writers, Projects such as Accelerated Tertiary Book Publishing in Science and Technology; Local Authorship Promotion (Budding Authors) Project and children Story Picture Books Project being undertaken by Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) should be well funded so that more quality books could be produced for the Nigerian educational system.
- In relation to the above, the need for the establishment of a National Book Commission once more becomes most relevant. This need has been expressed several times in the past but the government has not acted on the recommendation. It is therefore necessary to use this medium to once more highlight some of the functions of a National Book Commission. The proposed Commission shall be supervised, either by the Presidency or the Federal Ministry of Education and it will monitor and co-ordinate all activities of the book industry. The Commission shall be responsible for the development of the book industry and ensure a stable supply of books, at affordable prices, to the entire educational system and beyond.
- The problem of book piracy should also be seriously checked. This should be done by applying the stringent provisions of the Copyright Law so that the Copyright Commission can effectively combat book piracy. Book pirates are like armed robbers because they defraud the author, publishers, government and the society. This is because pirates do not pay profit tax on the huge easy/illegal money they make neither do they help the country in tackling the problem of unemployment.
- The most important of all the lessons we have to learn from the lack of commitment in

solving the problems of the book industry is that government lacks a strong political will to implement the recommendations of the commitment / seminars or conferences it set up. This has made the book industry to be in the mess it is up till date.

Government should therefore muster the required political will to revisit and implement the past recommendations already submitted to it because the recommendations are still as relevant today to the Nigerian book industrial sector as they were by the time they were made. Books should be treated as essential commodities in crisis requiring prompt and drastic solution. The enactment into law and faithful implementation of the provisions of the final draft of the National Book Policy (1992) will be the beginning of the eradication of the problems of the Nigerian book industry.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The mission, vision, objectives, the historical background, the benefit and the problems of the book industry have been highlighted and briefly analyzed. The paper decried government's lukewarm attitude towards implementing the provisions/recommendations of committees it willingly set up. It was therefore the submission of the paper that government should muster enough political will and enact a law establishing the National Book Commission as well as the National Book Policy as practical moves of government sincerity in tackling the perennial problems of the book industry. All efforts must be made to halt the ugly threat of Nigeria degenerating further in to a bookless society.

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Citation: Abdullahi I Musa, Olowu Labeshi Toby, Unobe Elameyi Susan, "Exploratory Study of Nigeria International Book Fair", *Research Journal of Library and Information Science*, 4(3), 2020, pp. 16-23.

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