Change Beliefs of Gambling Behavior in Thai Society

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate and review different Thai gambler's behavior from past to present gambling styles. It uses qualitative methods to collect data with in-depth interviews of 10 gamblers through the snowball technique. The interviews use a through video call with an unstandardized form. The results reveal that 1) currently there are many types of online gambling where players can bet via a website. This is a new gambling style that is different from original gambling style which is typically between a gambler and gambling host; 2) gamblers play more often anytime during the day and anywhere with a variety of gambling programs via smart phone, tablet, or computer; 3) technology devices have a strong influence on gambler's behavior, i.e., Facebook and LINE; 4) The beliefs change along variety of gambling programs so those (superstition, faith, angles, holiness, and other situations) beliefs in the past were eliminated and new gambling styles (superstition and technology devices that guide to player) were created in their place; 5) the cashless society from technology and government significant impacts the new gambling behaviors by allowing internet banking for player credit.

Keywords: Gamblers behavior, Online gambling, Beliefs, Thai society

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Introduction

Gambling is thing people knew all over the world. Some countries allow it legally and some countries do not. The number of gamblers tend to increase for online gambling websites (H2 gambling capital, 2013) and involves large sums of money. Gambling in Thailand is illegal but many people ignore this. It is typical for Thai's to play the lottery game as "Hoi". Predictably, in the Asia-Pacific, the online gambling market would grow in 2015 by 18.3% from 2010 ($79,266) (Kampeeranon, 2015). Moreover, the total gross revenues of mobile gaming and betting will reach just over $19 billion in 2018, or nearly 45% of total interactive gambling gross win as graph below:
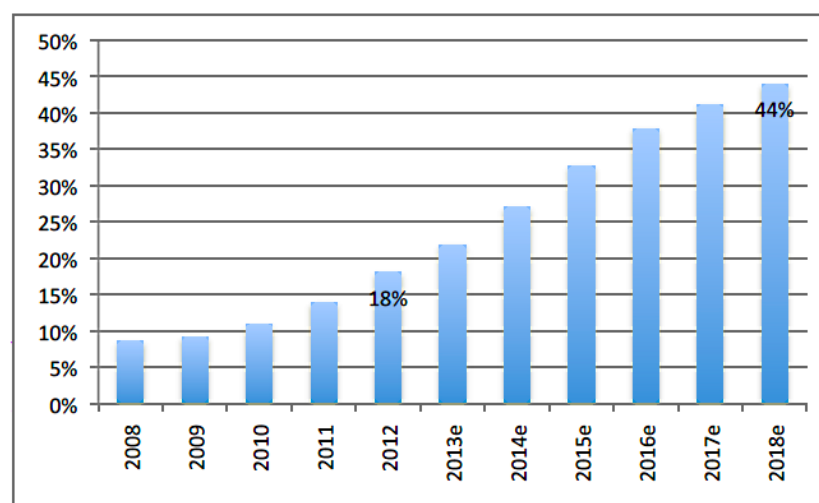

Figure 1 global mobile gambling gross win as a percentage of total interactive

(source: H2 Gambling Capital, November, 2013)

Furthermore, Yuan (2015) refers that the Chinese know that winning the lottery is unrealistic but they are more likely to play it if the prize is higher. The application of risk / reward is used as a tool to motivate a player. It also indicates that there is an opportunity to create a service provider by offering online gambling services to improve the game over the internet and make it easy to operate and promote a good image among users (Humphreys and Perez, 2012).

Due to many the reasons above, gambling is popular and is likely to grow even though the general population knows that few people get rich from gambling. Thai society is also in the same situation.   Some people get into big problems but they still play the game. According to mobile devices on internet, many Thai people use Line and Facebook for social media called "mobile first". The people in the world are changing to online via mobile device

more.The most popular chat programs in the world are Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger, Viber, Wechat, and LINE respectively (Brand Buffet, 2018). Thailand has 46 million active social media users through smart device from 69.11 million (67%), LINE users 32 million (Bangkok Post, 2018), Facebook users 51 million world No.8 rating (Statista, 2018).Due to those significant changes, players in online gambling in Thailand change their behavior at the same time. It means most of player changed, i.e., increasing number of gamblers via website online, many online lottery programs available whole day so that causes player trying search any channel to make them confident gamble on time. Therefore, this case concentrates on investigating how gambling behavior changes along with mobile first to access betting and review the difference between past and present.

Gambling behavior

Gambling is familiar to people all over the world. There are currently many types of gambling online. They are created by a host into variety of playing styles. Some countries rapidly opened investigations into whether it is legal or not. Moreover, gambling behavior between developed countries and underdeveloped countries is clearly different. In South Africa, there were 40 legal casinos at one time but it caused many problems because the people played with the hope of getting rich rather than playing for fun and relaxation. Contrast that to developed countries such as the UK where the majority of people gamble for fun to relaxation. Sornsuphap (2012) referred the comparative of a gambling casino to Singapore that is not just for gambling but is also includes tourist attractions such as department store, museum and so on. The number of problems is smaller because law enforcement is rigorous.

There are two ways for recognizing risk: probability and consequence that affects the player's thinking. These risks are indirectly influenced by trust and influence in the decision-making process of the gambler to use online games (Lee, Lee, & Kim 2007; Fortes, Moreira & Saraiva, 2016). Players who continue to raise their bets show that the player is more confident. It shows less control over the players who control their betting level (Blaszczynski & Nower, 2007).

According to the analysis of attitude towards money, in the sample 212 people were subjected to obsessive-compulsive disorder. The analysis found that the perception risk factors associated with economic perception were in the opposite direction to the prevalence of psychological distress. That is, people with high awareness are associated with low risk things

(Elisabeth and Lennart, 2007). Risk perception in the dimension of risk-related exchanges can cause the player to take a risk even if the person is aware the risk, but they believe they can benefit from the action or investment. As a result, the risk is not perceived as high as it should be. For generations, Thais have a deep belief that the lottery system is not inherently bad and it is a normal practice, especially in rural areas. The risk of loss is generally understood but there is no sense of shame about it and they are still quite happy to play the next game. These games mean to promote a dream of a luxurious lifestyle with the possibility of winning but it does not deter them when they are defeated (Holtegraves, 1988). Players also display dignity and react calmly even when they lose.

In addition, most youth gamble in a relatively responsible manner and few have negative gambling-related behaviors. There was obvious evidence that they composed a fragile group for gambling disorders (Derevensky & St-Pierre, 2016). On the other hand, 26% of social casino were moved to online gambling after they are surveyed by researchers (Kim, Wohl, Salmon, Gupta, and Derevensky, 2015). Miller & Currie (2008) argued that the risky gambling behaviors, i.e., loan to gamble, wager more to recoup prior losses, and bet more than one can afford for Canadian gamblers had positive relationship to cognitive distortions.

Thai society and gambling beliefs

Gambling defined differently across cultures. It notes that gambling is plated by the collective attitude and acquired via cultural customs (Dickins & Thomas, 2016). These alternative definitions of gambling results suggest that certain gambling may be perceived as acceptable in some cultures but for others. Chinese gamblers (Oei & Goh, 2015) believed those cultural beliefs help prompt or protect against disordered gambling because of various risk and protective factors. It has been speculated that cultural beliefs which favor gambling, i.e., those based on superstition, faith, luck, and chance, might encourage cross-cultural differences in gambling by focusing on and participating in gambling regularly (Oei & Goh, 2015; Raylu & Oei, 2004b). Meanwhile, luck and chance were in most cultures while some cultures hand more profound beliefs in superstition, fate, luck, and chance as religion (Dickins & Thomas, 2016). Those beliefs will be expected to extend a given culture's gambling practice (Papineau, 2005; Raylu & Oei, 2004b). Moreover, a case of American and Chinese gamblers has found similar strong superstition beliefs related gambling rituals compared to Japanese and Korean gamblers who are not likely to endorse superstitions thinking types (Kim et al., 2016).

There are many gambling beliefs in Thailand. It is not only older people but also younger people who gamble. For the gambling side, most gamblers pay attention to the games with the belief in hope, luck, superstition, or holy thoughts. Consequences of the Thai lottery may look strange for other countries and seem ridiculous for people who have never played. By the way, many Thai people believe that it is a matter of luck and gambling gets its inspiration from the strange things around. Creating an atmosphere of social interaction that is fun and evocative within the excitement of winning (Bloch, 1951) enables online gambling to causes the willingness to act (Abarbanel, Bernhard, Singh, & Lucas, 2015).

According to La Lucian's record and other historical evidence, Thais generally believe that they have the ability of being a gambler that is unique and prevents them from having gambling problems. Thai senior scholar anthropology confirms that this belief is not true. Gambling is bound to the social system as a kind of power relationship. It may not be the case with all people whether rich or poor. It may be a power relationship between humans and what calls a power such as ghosts, demons, destiny, lawlessness, etc. When the power comes with risk, e.g., the ancient agricultural society, people survive difficult conditions or illness in an era where medicine is not progressing. People manage risks to see how they can do, i.e., buying a lottery.

Otherwise, beliefs about skill may be more important for encouraging excessive gambling behaviors while beliefs about luck may have a greater influence on developing gambling problems of Dutch gamblers (Cowie et al., 2017). Moreover, gamblers who believe they have greater gambling skill may wager more frequently and spend more time gambling. Two subscales were related to gambling perspective different outcome, i.e., luck/chance was related to greater gambling problems, skill/attitude was related to greater gambling behavior (Cowie et al., 2017). To Canadian gamblers, those factors have a special gambling relationship as well, one belief was skills, another belief one was lucky (McInnes, Hodgins, & Holub, 2014).

Additionally, superstition beliefs are found by Joukhador, Blaszczynski & Maccallumet (2004) that those around gambling have spent more time gambling and involved more gambling programs each week compared to gamblers with less superstition beliefs.

Influence of Technology

A technology supporting which influences to gambling is Facebook (Kim et al., 2015) to promote gambling websites and attract new players as showing advertisements. Moreover, in Australian investigation, result displays that most of gambling participation attends lottery, lotto or pools form of gambling as 43.2% (Gainsbury, Russell, Hing, Wood, Lubman, and Blaszczynski, 2015). Further interactive gambling behaviors tend to be younger males who have access to the internet at home. They participate in more gambling patterns, and spend more gambling. In the past, Thai society was booming with a variety of illegal games, i.e., lottery, football games and casinos. It is easy to play those games before online gaming was available.

An obstacle to online gambling is language even though Thais have known the online websites for two decades. Why they can not run? They have summarized as follows: a) unfamiliarity b) language c) a variety of gambling games. Then, the financial system improved, i.e., internet banking, people is familiarity and unlocked feeling anxiety as government regulation that tries to encourage cashless society. National e-Payment Master Plan comprises four projects, i.e., PromptPay, Electronic Data Capture (EDC), e-Tax Invoice & e-Receipt, and e-Payment (e-Withholding Tax) (Chiangraitimes, 2018)

On the other hand, language also improved through websites particularly Asia (e.g., Thais, Japanese, Chinese). It is the cooperation between Thai businessmen and foreign businessmen that has managed to reach two points, i.e., confirmation that the company exists and confidence for reward as well as confidence in the reward process in case of a casino. Otherwise, Simpson (2001) argues that the problem of using credit card is related to player transfer. Some of financial banks denied to approve the credit to the player but now all websites have improved the program to make it easier. If any player does not have a credit card, they can bet using internet banking or transfer via ATM. Moreover, the big change of online via mobile device is strong influence everywhere (Brand Buffet, 2018).

Due to those circumstances above, there were two dimensions which reflected via lottery gambling, i.e., belief and gambling behavior. Therefore, this case would search how behavior are and what gambler change.

Method

This research used qualitative in-depth interviews using 10 individual key informants. The interview form is unstandardized. Participants were gambling online or playing the lottery regularly and as often as almost every day. All participants were active in online gaming sites but for varying amounts of time. The snowball technique and survey were utilized in findings. The interview was performed via video call with 7 questions. Data triangulation and typological analysis were used to analyze and interpret data into findings. Otherwise, the researcher was an important tool of research. Beside, the participants were from ages 26-55 and were job holders with various occupations. It comprised of 3 men and 7 women. Their careers included: 2 public officers, 2 private company officers, 1 seller, 1 housekeeper, 1 owner of spa massage, 1 owner business, 1 street food, and 1 company employee.

Results and Discussion

According to the unstructured interview form, the results of the research objective follow behavior of Thai gamblers on beliefs. There are categories both past and present as figure 2:

Summary of Thai gamblers behavior has comprised five matters; faith, superstition, holiness, angles, and other situations that holds with luck/chance (Dickins & Thomas, 2016; McInnes, Hodgins, & Holub, 2014) term of original gambling style. On the other hand, it has included superstition, technology devices, i.e., Facebook and LINE sites which hold with skill/attitude (Dickins & Thomas, 2016; Oei & Goh, 2015; Raylu & Oei, 2004b; Cowie et al., 2017; McInnes, Hodgins, & Holub, 2014) under new gambling styles.

Faith: is sacred and gives luck in different areas, e.g., the dough on a large tree such as banana tree, belief in ancient animals that are long standing turtles and so on. They believe in a figure appearing if the person has a fortune.

Superstition: with reptiles including snakes, water monitors (Varanus salvator), and things rare which affects behavior to make sure gamblers have the fortune of gambling at that time and affects more bets. Moreover, superstitious beliefs influence to wagers significantly.

Holiness: believe in a personal capacity, it is a faith such as the famous priest, namely Loung Po Pak Dang, Buddhist (Phram Mani) temple, Nakhonnayok, the famous Queen folk singer died, namely Pum Puang Duangchan etc.

Angels: it was seen as ignorant. Reflective behavior comes in the form of the tie multicolored fabric to big tree worship for the lottery. Respecting rituals such as medium ceremony, religious ceremony such as housewarming, Kathin merit ceremony on Lent day for Buddhism. They link to the gamble and so on.

Other situations in society it may occur naturally, e.g., accidents, political events involve important person such as Prime Minister's vehicle registration number, registration number of car accident case, address, and other famous statistical information and so on.

Lottery gambling changed with the development of gambling online and the gamblers changed their beliefs in ensuring bets. The results of the awards in the online lottery website have a wide range and the number of times is available throughout the day. Using the lottery for gambling has greatly changed. This change is attributable to two factors, superstition and technology devices such as Facebook and LINE.

Superstition: fortune is available. To be aware of the gambling losses, the gamblers solve that as "there are no horns", then there will be new hope and continuously to gamble with wager more to recoup prior losses.

Turn to rely on the technology, i.e., Facebook and LINE which gives access to the gamblers and can provide gambling at any time throughout the whole day. Therefore, the belief changed gamblers behavior and they have not followed those original beliefs anymore in regular gambling online. They are confident in the LINE applications performance in providing the right gambling results. They are confident in Facebook as well.Those applications provided many improved programs for Thai player. Because the gambling cultures in Thai society were profoundly ingrained, Thais never disdain the player. According to online gambling that is available all day with many types of lotteries. To increase the chance of winning, a new way was found as the formula for computing the lottery odds more logically so it was similar to skill/attitude (Dickins & Thomas, 2016; McInnes, Hodgins, & Holub, 2014). In addition, why superstition remains in new gambling styles is because most of players believe that if they are lucky in a game along technology devices, i.e., Facebook or LINE either, also they had confident skill/attitude, strong influence from them to wager more at that time (Bloch, 1951; Abarbanel, Bernhard, Singh, & Lucas, 2015; Papineau, 2005; Raylu & Oei, 2004b)

The important thing revealed that is why superstition remains for gamblers. It is the influence of the original Thai lottery, namely, government lottery that is on twice a month. Due to the finding, gambler changes reaction to the online gambling because of the variety of online programs. There are provided by programmers to adjust appropriately to each country

(Humphreys and Perez, 2012), Thailand also is a huge destination for that owner business along to deep belief of the risk of gambling for many decades (Kampeeranon, 2015).

Gambling in Thai society has demonstrated that different circumstances in the gambling process styles as overview on figure 3. First, original gambling style and secondly the new gambling style. They had the medium for playing lottery, person and website. Person medium was who gets a lottery from player and submit them to host of lottery gamble. It is available in original gambling style as opposed to website medium in new gamble style. Those websites where a program that is designed by a programmer to serve a player online with a credit account. At the same, original gambling style through medium(person) was only using cash or credit along promotions, e.g., discount 5 – 10%, pay after the result come in, pay next round and so on.
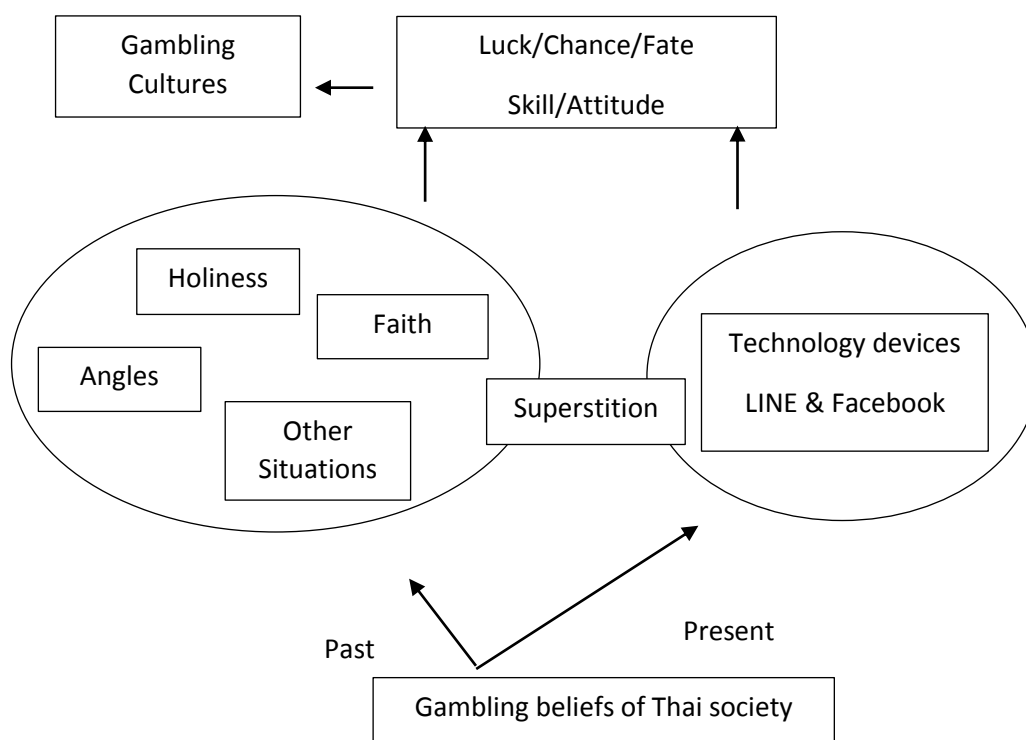

Figure 2 the review of how difference behavior of Thai beliefs on gambling

Medium(person) was who those players know well, they were neighborhood, i.e., relatives, neighbor. They have known each other including the address, personality, occupation etc. The majority of medium (person) had regular job but they arranged time for lottery business before the lottery result a few days. Whenever the players desire gamble, they can

find direct medium very easily, i.e., walking straight to their house, calling them by phone, or leaving others buy it and so on.

Subsequently, as the internet boomed in Thailand, gambling websites have started business particular lottery gamble. Medium(website) was another chance for player who could access internet but remaining limited area. They have changed their gambling behavior via medium (person) to medium (website). Furthermore, the financial gambling process has changed as well along to be credit account (Simpson, 2001). There was no cash anymore but many promotions have designed instead to attract the player.
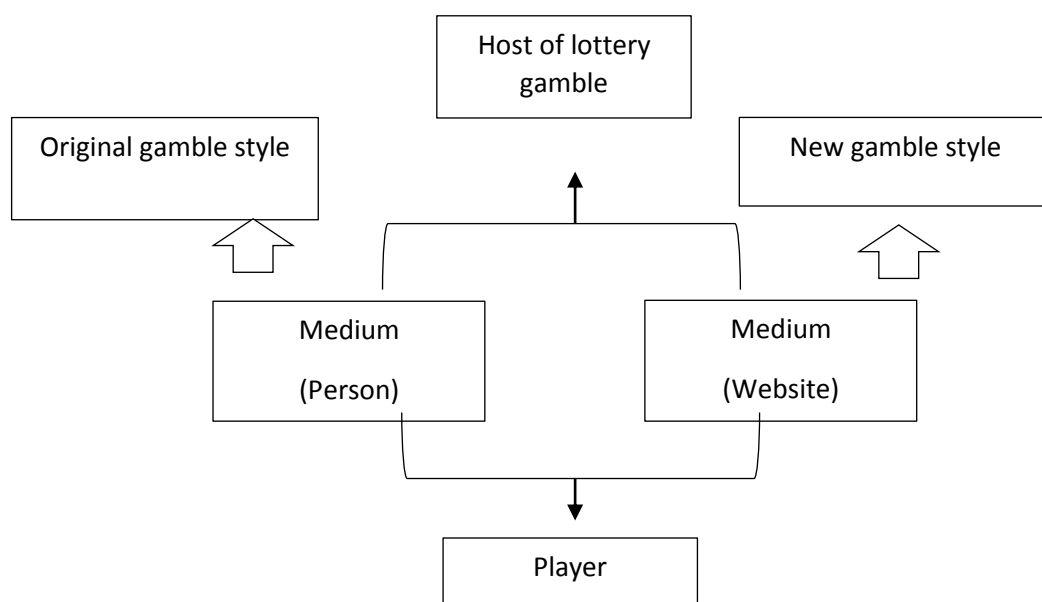
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                          ┌─────────────────────┐
                          │   Host of lottery   │
                          │       gamble        │
                          └─────────────────────┘
┌──────────────────────┐         ↑          ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Original gamble style│        │          │   New gamble style    │
└──────────────────────┘        │          └──────────────────────┘
         ⇑                       │                    ⇑
┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐
│     Medium       │   │     Medium        │
│    (Person)      │   │    (Website)      │
└──────────────────┘   └──────────────────┘
                  │        ↓        │
              ┌─────────────────────┐
              │       Player        │
              └─────────────────────┘
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Figure 3   how gamble process for lottery

Due to change of lottery gambling process, Thai player's behavior in term of belief has changed as well. Many gambling programs that exists the whole daily to make those players working hard to find anything instead what they believed. Facebook and LINE were very influential in online gambling in the present (Kim et al., 2015). Players have tried to find a way to bet, therefore those devices know how to motivate the player link to website and used Facebook and LINE to be the medium for their gambling. Furthermore, original gambling style has changed to new gambling style and consequently the players do not care anymore for the many previous beliefs. They have changed behavior to believe Facebook and LINE can guide lottery for them. In addition, if they have met something similar to their belief, they would be certain and gamble more (Bloch, 1951; Abarbanel et al., 2015) that contrast to Elisabeth and Lennart' s finding (2007). They have argued that players with high awareness are related to low risk. They have never given up or failed because they continue to play those games.

Conclusion

The objective was to answer the research question of how different behaviors interact between past and present on Thai gambling. The beliefs have changed as technology devices have developed. From the original gambling style into the new gambling style that plays through a different medium, i.e., medium (person) to medium (website). Both mediums are linked between the player and host of lottery, with different promotions to motivate the player. Due to technology devices adopted by gamblers, behaviors have changed from original gambling style which includes superstition, faith, holiness, angles, and other situations that strong influence to them significantly into the new gambling style. It exhibits superstition and technology devices, i.e., Facebook and LINE that makes the player confident when they bet.

Superstition remains in the belief for Thai player even though they pay attention to online gambling for lottery so that the cultural of gambling from the past to present also keep going. On the other hand, the development of a cashless society supported by the government, contributes to online gambling through internet banking for player credit.

Research implementation and recommendation

The gamblers beliefs were not found by researcher to be criminal, or cause bankruptcy and financial crisis and so on. Those players keep playing on the hopes to win a big reward and become rich at the same time. They are happy and excited to gamble with either gambling style. Beside, it could be player were adult and they had permanent career therefore it was very interesting to consider young generation or player who has no exist job either to find out in next case.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of Interest Supit Boonlab declares that she has no conflict of interest.

Human and Animal Rights and Informed Consent This article does not contain any studies with human or animal subjects performed by any of the authors.

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