

# MARKETING ENVIRONMENT OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs) AT PAHANG IN MALAYSIA

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## ABSTRACT

**Aims:** the main aim is to find out the Socio and Economic Profile of SMEs at Pahang and also to scrutinize the Internal and External forces of Marketing Environment of the SMEs at Pahang.

**Place and Duration of Study:** study has directed only for Small Medium and Enterprises registered with Pahang state development corporation (PSDC) was used as respondents for a period of 2013-2014.

**Methodology:** primary data: the instrument selected for this research is questionnaire survey. Survey instrument is referred to a form that is composed of structured questions answers asked from the sample of 94 participants consisting of 37 female and 57 male respondents. The questionnaire mainly included self-designed questions and the survey instrument was developed to suit the targeted respondents in the present study. Since the target respondents are the SMEs. Secondary data: All existing literature has obtained from internet websites, magazines, and e- journals. Data has analyzed through ranked method by using 5-point Likert scale represented by 1- strongly agree to 5-strongly disagree.

**Results:** the outcome of the study reveals that the small and medium enterprises are located outside the their respective city and the most respondents perceived that the environmental variables are conducive to the success of their business as respondents were asked to answer based on the environment in which they operate the *Halal* business.

**Conclusion:** the halal market is huge and attracts SMEs all over the world, future research can also be conducted to examine the level of success of halal SMES in other parts of the world. Since the marketing environment is different in the sense that the SMEs in other countries might have different requirements or different perceptions of influence of the

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environment.

*Keywords:* Entrepreneurs, Marketing, Environment, Halal, Small and Medium Enterprises, Pahang

*Type:* Research Paper

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, entrepreneurs and the development of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have always been central to nation building. Effective and supportive environment have been established to develop and nurture new enterprises. As the emergence of new market creates even more opportunities to encourage entrepreneurship activities, many countries are now actively promoting the growth of new business through entrepreneurship activities. SMEs are found in a broad range of sectors, from manufacturing to sales and marketing, finance, and education.

The Malaysian government has stepped up every possible effort to develop SMEs, and recently the country has urged SMEs to take participation in the 12 National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs)—sectors which have successfully been identified as driving financial enlargement. SMEs will also be capable of finding the correct solutions which will help in transforming their input to the GDP, which has been forecasted to be about 50% to 60% by 2020.

One obvious question that emerges at this stage is why we should give so much of importance to marketing environment of SMEs. The answer might not be that simple because there are a host of issues involved. However, one thing is undoubtedly agreed upon by all is that, without proper analysis of marketing environment and proper marketing of the products, the very existence of entrepreneurs who depend on various income-generating activities in those areas will be in danger. Furthermore, economic development is significantly dependent on entrepreneurship. Thus, that the proper analysis of marketing environment of SMEs is one of the stepping stones for SMEs development, which ultimately results in economic development and growth. In Malaysia, the entrepreneurship education can be seen as a national agenda in line with the development of Small Medium Enterprises under the Ninth Malaysian Plan. The growth of entrepreneurship education and training programs in recent years has been tremendous with the introduction of both formal and general educational programs at higher institutions in Malaysia to more specific training programs in respective industries that are offered to the public.

The government and other non-governmental agencies are also playing an important role in strengthening the SME sector in the country since they are the backbone of the economy. However, being small and medium in size poses some challenges to them. SMEs in the country operate within a multitudinous of factors that can cause constraints to such firms. Among the various constraints is the lack of a right kind of marketing effort that turns out to be a major problem these days. Since SMEs are small, lack of proper analysis of marketing environment may hinder the development of their businesses. The marketing environment, which consists of all actors and forces that will affect the way businesses meet their

customer is also changing like any other environmental factors. As changes are inevitable, measures in the marketing efforts that can ensure success of entrepreneurs in the country is crucial.

### 1.1 Need and Significance of the Study

The importance of SMEs for the economy has been realized and identified; the government will have to play a crucial function in generating an enabling conducive scenario for SMEs. In 2010, a total of 354 programs with an assurance of RM6.02 billion were under implementation for the development of high-performing and elastic SMEs. The administration will continue its pursuit of developing policies, initiatives, and programs that would intensify support for the local SMEs. Over the past few years, the Malaysian government has been promoting the idea of entrepreneurship to its citizenry through various training and support programs. For several years, various bodies such as the Council of Trust for the Bumiputera—an agency under the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development and better known as Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) — as well as the former Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Cooperative Development (MECD) and Multimedia Development Corporation (MDeC) have been assigned roles to enhance entrepreneurship activities and to develop entrepreneurs.

#### 1.1. Objectives of the Study

- i) To Examine the Socio and Economic Profile of SMEs at Pahang
- ii) To Scrutinize the Internal and External forces of Marketing Environment of the SMEs at Pahang

**1.3. Period of the Study:** period of the study is for the year 2013-2014.

**1.4. Scope of the Study:** The study of Marketing Environment of small and medium enterprises at Pahang in Malaysia is only to the extent of Halal SMEs.

**1.5. Limitations of the Study:** In this study only the SMEs registered with Pahang state development corporation (PSDC) was used as respondents. However the reliability depends on the true nature of their response.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

**2.1.** Burgmann(2007)<sup>1</sup>, Moreover, it is important to note that the concept of halal is not restricted to food or diet only. It is also a subjective issue that differs according to opinions and includes nonfood. Generally, it pertains to cosmetics and medicines, hygiene and diet supplements, art, culture, finance, and even marriage. The concept of halal has received alarming positive reviews that can be associated with religious enthusiasm and sincerity. Also, most practitioners assure that following the concept signifies a clean and healthy lifestyle. Some outsiders maintain that it is only led by the desire of customers to conform to religious beliefs and to be accepted in their community, while others consider it as a string attached to increasing globalization.

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**2.2.** On the other side, in the perspective of Kuratko and Hodgetts (2004)<sup>2</sup> an entrepreneur is a daring person. He is daring enough to take the risks that a business entail, an entrepreneur is a creative person who remains in quest of new resources so that old resources can be replaced so that profit can be made.

**2.3.** According to Saleh and Ndubis, (2006)<sup>3</sup> stated that in Malaysia, SMEs play immensely important role in the national economy with the help of its business operation that has more than a quarter of all manufacturing output.

**2.4.** Thurasamy, Mohamad, Omar, & Marimuthu, (2009)<sup>4</sup> opined that, as far as the production sector of Malaysia is concerned, SMEs are known to play an important part in developing the economy of the country. According to the data gathered around 2006, it was revealed that SMEs revolved around almost hundred percent of the businesses and added to around fifty percent of the GDP while providing employment to over sixty-five percent of Malaysia's labor force. What is unfortunate is the fact that despite their importance, they are occasionally overlooked as they are not able to garner the required assistance of foreign investors.

**2.5.** According to Aris( 2007)<sup>5</sup> had identified that, the SMEs in Malaysia have gradually become one of the main contributors to the Malaysian economy. SMEs are often considered as the backbone of economic by virtue of their size and nature of their businesses, numbers, and increasing share in employment and Gross Domestic Product. SMEs too, are now one of the well identified and recognized areas in the development of entrepreneurs in Malaysia.

**2.6.** In the perspective of Kuratko and Hodgetts (2004)<sup>6</sup>, an entrepreneur is a daring person. He is daring enough to take the risks that a business entail, an entrepreneur is a creative person who remains in quest of new resources so that old resources can be replaced so that profit can be made.

**2.7.** According to the Malaysian SMI Association (July 17, 2001, The Star)<sup>7</sup> reported that ,it was discovered that hardly thirty percent of the total SMIs in the country made use of their own website. Furthermore, few of these websites were kept up-to-date and reflected current information.

**2.8.** Work by Keh, Nguyen, and Ng (2007)<sup>8</sup> also suggests that, there exist a third element that could explain this. His research showed that marketing environment may also be related to these two factors. This may be explained by the way entrepreneur's characteristics and the types of entrepreneurship education and training may both be influenced by the marketing decisions made based on the marketing environment in which the SMEs are in, thereby providing a combined impact on the business.

**2.9.** Factually, Keh et al (2007)<sup>9</sup> further researches and proposes that, the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation (as identified by training and characteristics) and the organizational performance actually is moderated by one of the variables of marketing environment which is marketing mix (internal decision). On the basis of the available evidence it would be logical to conclude the significance of innovative marketing strategies to the business. If the SME is run by an entrepreneur who possesses the optimal and desired sets of skills but, the organization does not implement effective marketing strategies then it may cause a negative impact on the

effects noted. This cannot be considered as an issue that should be investigated in any sufficient details in relation to empirical evidence, despite the fact that the theory that extends its support to this concept would be rational.

**2.10.** A study of Rose, Kumar and Yen (2006a)<sup>10</sup> shows that, the quality of taking personal initiative as the quality that is most associated with the growth and success of the business. These same researchers conduct another study. In this another study, the researchers identify the successful businesses and then with the help of questionnaire an attempt is made to know the traits and characteristics that have helped these businesses in gaining success.

**2.11.** As Sivapalan (2001)<sup>11</sup> said, "without entrepreneurs, there is no knowledge economy," efforts have been taken to nurture entrepreneurship in all ways. Conferences, seminars, short courses and training on entrepreneurship are being held and organized by various organizations, along with the formal entrepreneurship education offered by higher-education institutions. Both public and private organizations have started to introduce entrepreneurship education and training programmes at various levels.

**2.12.** Kirby (2002)<sup>12</sup> while discussing the difference between the entrepreneurial education and education of traditional management asserts that, here is a difference between imparting education about entrepreneurship and traditional education of management. He further claimed that there are certain aspects of traditional management education that may impede the development of important skills and qualities for entrepreneurship.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **Primary Data:**

The instrument selected for this research is questionnaire survey. Survey instrument is referred to a form that is composed of structured questions answers asked from the sample of 94 participants consisting of 37 female and 57 male respondents. The questionnaire mainly included self-designed questions and the survey instrument was developed to suit the targeted respondents in the present study. Since the target respondents are the SMEs, it should be noted that they are perceived as simple and non-cumbersome. As such the language and format of the questionnaire was developed to suit the respondents for its simplicity and user-friendliness. The language use in the questionnaire was both Bahasa Malaysia and English because of their respective status as the national and business jargons in Malaysia.

#### **Secondary Data:**

All existing literature has obtained from internet websites, magazines, and e- journals.

#### **Analysis of Data:**

The initial section consisted of profile information and demographic characteristics of the research participants, followed by their perception of level of success as compared to their nearest competitors using 5-point Likert scale. Then the participants were asked to rank the statements in the second and third part of the questionnaire based on contextual conditions associated with each factor that measures success by the participants. These statements were ranked using 5-point Likert scale represented by 1- strongly agree to 5- strongly disagree.

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#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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##### 4.1. Socio and Economic Profile of Small and Medium Enterprises at Pahang

|                                             |                    | Frequency (n = 94) | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| <b>Gender</b>                               | Male               | 37                 | 39.4           |
|                                             | Female             | 57                 | 60.6           |
| <b>Age Group<br/>(in years)</b>             | Less than 21       | 4                  | 4.3            |
|                                             | 21 to 30           | 21                 | 22.3           |
|                                             | 31 to 40           | 20                 | 21.3           |
|                                             | 41 to 50           | 46                 | 48.9           |
|                                             | More than 50       | 3                  | 3.2            |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>                            | Malay              | 64                 | 68.1           |
|                                             | Chinese            | 25                 | 26.6           |
|                                             | Indian             | 5                  | 5.3            |
| <b>Highest<br/>Education<br/>Level</b>      | Primary School     | 10                 | 10.6           |
|                                             | Secondary School   | 28                 | 29.8           |
|                                             | College            | 27                 | 28.7           |
|                                             | University         | 29                 | 30.9           |
| <b>Years of<br/>Experience</b>              | 0 to 2 years       | 21                 | 22.3           |
|                                             | 3 to 5 years       | 34                 | 36.2           |
|                                             | 6 to 8 years       | 32                 | 34.0           |
|                                             | More than 8 years  | 7                  | 7.4            |
| <b>Years of<br/>Business<br/>Experience</b> | 3 years or less    | 13                 | 13.8           |
|                                             | 4 to 6 years       | 29                 | 30.9           |
|                                             | 7 to 9 years       | 23                 | 24.5           |
|                                             | 10 to 12 years     | 25                 | 26.6           |
|                                             | more than 12 years | 4                  | 4.3            |
| <b>Type of<br/>Business</b>                 | Sole Proprietor    | 46                 | 48.9           |
|                                             | Partnership        | 27                 | 28.7           |
|                                             | Private Limited    | 21                 | 22.3           |
| <b>Types of<br/>Industry</b>                | Food and Beverage  | 45                 | 47.9           |
|                                             | Services           | 23                 | 24.5           |
|                                             | ICT                | 14                 | 14.9           |
|                                             | Agriculture        | 8                  | 8.5            |
|                                             | Financial          | 1                  | 1.1            |
|                                             | Others             | 3                  | 3.2            |
| <b>Types of<br/>Industry</b>                | Less than 6        | 27                 | 28.7           |
|                                             | 6.00 - 10.00       | 32                 | 34.0           |
|                                             | 11.00 - 15.00      | 15                 | 16.0           |
|                                             | 16.00 - 20.00      | 10                 | 10.6           |
|                                             | More than 20       | 10                 | 10.6           |
| <b>Location of<br/>Business</b>             | City               | 17                 | 18.1           |
|                                             | Outside city       | 77                 | 81.9           |

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|                  |  |  |  |
|------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>operation</b> |  |  |  |
|------------------|--|--|--|

207 Source: field work

208 Above table 4.1. indicates about Socio and Economic Profile of Small and Medium  
 209 Enterprises at Pahang. In term of gender structure, female respondents were more than the  
 210 male respondents with 60% of the respondents are female and 40% are males. The majority  
 211 of respondents were aged between 41 to 50 years (49%). Large numbers of respondents  
 212 were Malay ethnicity (64%). Years of experiences were varied among respondents and  
 213 majority of them (77%) had more than 3 years of experiences before starting their own  
 214 business. More than 48percent of the respondents were the sole proprietor of their  
 215 businesses. Food and beverage was the popular industry among respondents in which  
 216 45(47%) out 94 respondents were a part of this industry and majority have more than 3  
 217 years of experience in business. The number of employees clearly showed that the  
 218 businesses were SME with majority having less than 10 employees (62.7%) As for the  
 219 academic background, majority finished above secondary school with 59.6 percent  
 220 graduated from college and university. Finally, about 82 percent of respondents' businesses  
 221 were located outside the city.

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223 **Table.4.2 Internal and External forces of Marketing Environment of the Small and**  
 224 **Medium Enterprises at Pahang**

| MARKETING ENVIRONMENT |                                                       | Mean=3.62              |               |              |            |                     |       |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|--------------|------------|---------------------|-------|
|                       |                                                       | Strongly Disagree<br>1 | Disagree<br>2 | Neutral<br>3 | Agree<br>4 | Strongly Agree<br>5 | Total |
| Political and Social  |                                                       |                        |               |              |            |                     |       |
| 1                     | Increase legislation regulating business              | 0                      | 3             | 30           | 56         | 5                   | 94    |
| 2                     | Changing government agency enforcement                | 0                      | 4             | 26           | 58         | 6                   | 94    |
| 3                     | Increase Emphasis on ethics and social responsibility | 0                      | 3             | 20           | 66         | 5                   | 94    |
| Economic              |                                                       |                        |               |              |            |                     |       |
| 1                     | Consumer purchasing power                             | 0                      | 2             | 18           | 68         | 6                   | 94    |
| 2                     | Change in consumer income                             | 0                      | 2             | 23           | 59         | 10                  | 94    |
| 3                     | Change in spending pattern                            | 0                      | 2             | 18           | 66         | 8                   | 94    |
| Demography            |                                                       |                        |               |              |            |                     |       |
| 1                     | Changing age structure of population                  | 1                      | 4             | 41           | 43         | 5                   | 94    |
| 2                     | Geographic Shifts in Population                       | 1                      | 9             | 33           | 45         | 6                   | 94    |
| 3                     | Increasing Diversity                                  | 3                      | 6             | 31           | 50         | 4                   | 94    |

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| MARKETING ENVIRONMENT |  | Mean=3.62              |               |              |            |                     |       |
|-----------------------|--|------------------------|---------------|--------------|------------|---------------------|-------|
|                       |  | Strongly Disagree<br>1 | Disagree<br>2 | Neutral<br>3 | Agree<br>4 | Strongly Agree<br>5 | Total |

|                              |                                            |                          |                 |                |              |                       |              |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Technology                   |                                            |                          |                 |                |              |                       |              |
| 1                            | Change in market structure                 | 2                        | 4               | 28             | 50           | 10                    | 94           |
| 2                            | New business opportunity                   | 0                        | 3               | 25             | 55           | 11                    | 94           |
| 3                            | Opportunity to introduce new product       | 0                        | 2               | 22             | 58           | 12                    | 94           |
| Culture                      |                                            |                          |                 |                |              |                       |              |
| 1                            | Persistence of Cultural values             | 0                        | 2               | 39             | 48           | 5                     | 94           |
| 2                            | Shifts in Secondary Cultural Values        | 1                        | 5               | 28             | 54           | 6                     | 94           |
| 3                            | Society's view of business environment     | 0                        | 2               | 31             | 52           | 9                     | 94           |
| Natural                      |                                            |                          |                 |                |              |                       |              |
| 1                            | Shortage of Raw materials                  | 3                        | 2               | 29             | 51           | 9                     | 94           |
| 2                            | Increased Pollution                        | 6                        | 3               | 24             | 56           | 5                     | 94           |
| 3                            | Increase Government Intervention           | 8                        | 1               | 24             | 55           | 6                     | 94           |
| Internal organisation        |                                            |                          |                 |                |              |                       |              |
| 1                            | Top management                             | 1                        | 1               | 28             | 56           | 8                     | 94           |
| 2                            | Research and Development                   | 0                        | 0               | 30             | 55           | 9                     | 94           |
| 3                            | Team work                                  | 1                        | 1               | 22             | 62           | 8                     | 94           |
| Marketing intermediaries     |                                            |                          |                 |                |              |                       |              |
| 1                            | Agencies that promote /market your product | 0                        | 0               | 35             | 45           | 14                    | 94           |
| 2                            | Agencies that distribute your product      | 0                        | 3               | 24             | 55           | 12                    | 94           |
| 3                            | Agencies that sell your product            | 0                        | 2               | 24             | 56           | 12                    | 94           |
| <b>MARKETING ENVIRONMENT</b> |                                            | <b>Mean=3.62</b>         |                 |                |              |                       |              |
|                              |                                            | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Neutral</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Strongly Agree</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|                              |                                            | <b>1</b>                 | <b>2</b>        | <b>3</b>       | <b>4</b>     | <b>5</b>              |              |
| Competitor                   |                                            |                          |                 |                |              |                       |              |
| 1                            | Strategic positioning                      | 0                        | 2               | 37             | 48           | 7                     | 94           |

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|              |                                |    |   |    |    |    |    |
|--------------|--------------------------------|----|---|----|----|----|----|
| 2            | Competitive Advantage          | 0  | 0 | 25 | 56 | 13 | 94 |
| 3            | Marketing strategy             | 0  | 0 | 15 | 53 | 26 | 94 |
| Supply chain |                                |    |   |    |    |    |    |
| 1            | Supply of raw materials        | 8  | 8 | 27 | 41 | 10 | 94 |
| 2            | Supply availability            | 8  | 8 | 29 | 43 | 6  | 94 |
| 3            | Suppliers purchasing power     | 8  | 7 | 28 | 42 | 9  | 94 |
| Public       |                                |    |   |    |    |    |    |
| 1            | Financial publics              | 0  | 4 | 35 | 48 | 7  | 94 |
| 2            | Media support                  | 1  | 5 | 33 | 46 | 9  | 94 |
| 3            | Citizen action public          | 10 | 5 | 24 | 49 | 6  | 94 |
| Customer     |                                |    |   |    |    |    |    |
| 1            | Types of customers             | 4  | 8 | 35 | 42 | 5  | 94 |
| 2            | Customer purchasing structure  | 0  | 2 | 34 | 52 | 6  | 94 |
| 3            | Purpose of buying the products | 0  | 3 | 28 | 46 | 17 | 94 |

226 Source: Field work

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228 Table. 4.2. depicts about Internal and External forces of Marketing Environment of  
229 the Small and Medium Enterprises at Pahang. As for Marketing Environment, the score of  
230 each respondent was derived by averaging the above 36 items. Results show that most  
231 respondents perceived that the environmental variables are conducive to the success of  
232 their business as respondents were asked to answer based on the environment in which  
233 they operate the *Halal* business. Therefore, it can be concluded that the firstly shareholders  
234 or business owners were actively engaged in the decision making and operational activities  
235 of their respective halal businesses. Secondly, the enterprise should have been registered  
236 with PSDC, the business must still be active and in operation to be considered as halal SME.

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## 239 SUGGESTIONS

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- 241 1. From the above study it should be suggested that, as the main variable in this  
242 research, the halal marketing environment was proven a moderator in the final  
243 model presented in this study. The relationships between the independent variables  
244 and level of success are affected (influenced) by the marketing environment. Under  
245 low marketing environment, there is a positive relationship between level of success

and the lead success factors, while in high marketing environment the relationship is opposite. Therefore in a low marketing environment, both types of entrepreneurship education and training and personal characteristics are crucial to the success of the halal SME owners.

2. On one hand, the marketing environment is essential in allowing proper implementation of the various procedures and on the other hand, it is also required to ensure that the level of success of the process is increased significantly. This implies that although the marketing environment might or might place any direct impact on the industry and the overall effectiveness of the SME, the same places an indirect impact and thus influences the level of success or failure of the same. The inability of the concerned individuals to maintain proper environment, that is not only expected to facilitate the owners and encourage positive change and constructive ambiance, is required to cause an increase in the level of success of the SME owners, thus amplifying the moderating effect of the business environment and at the same time, highlighting the impact placed by the same on the concerned environment.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Therefore it can be concluded that, as the halal market is huge and attracts SMEs all over the world, future research can also be conducted to examine the level of success of halal SMES in other parts of the world. Since the marketing environment is different in the sense that the SMEs in other countries might have different requirements or different perceptions of influence of the environment, results may be able to show that marketing environment indeed play a significant moderating role. For instance, in Malaysia, the governing body that can issue a formal halal certification is only JAKIM, and no other bodies can do the same. In other countries, the certificate issued by the world halal governing body is sufficient. Another interesting perception that would lead to interesting result could be in terms of cultural and social environment, which includes the society's belief, cultural norms and practices. For example, the kosher market in the western countries has existed for a long time. As kosher is also similar to the concept of halal in Islam, in which kosher follows the religious teachings of the Jews, future research could include comparison of the two in areas of concepts, markets, success factors to name a few. This would contribute further to the body of knowledge and to the business world as a whole.

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