Investigating the Impact of Disclosing Generative AI's Involvement in Video Advertising

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Abstract

The deployment of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) in advertising industry has witnessed a significant increase during recent years. However, consensus on whether consumers should be informed of generative AI's involvement in video advertisement creation and how to mitigate the potential negative effects caused by such disclosure has not been well investigated. Drawing upon signaling theory, this research aims to investigate the effect caused by generative AI involvement disclosure in video advertisement. Besides, we provide possible explanation by examining the mediating role of authenticity perception. In addition, we suggest that the potential negative effects caused by AI involvement disclosure could be alleviated by adjusting the timing of disclosure. In this paper, we will discuss three experimental studies with the aim of testing the direct effects, the possible explanation, and the effects of timing strategy. This research will contribute to both theory development and the practice of AI deployment and human-AI collaboration within advertising field.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, AI-powered advertising, disclosure, timing, signaling theory

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has revolutionized the advertising industry by reshaping the way brands interact with consumers (Ford et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2024). The recent growth of generative AI tools, like ChatGPT and Sora, has even amplified this trend with the capability of generating new texts, images, and videos with prompts from human (Huh et al., 2023), highlighting the collaboration between human and AI. An increasing common scenario where AI generated advertisement replace physical shooting advertisement is shown in Figure 1. Generative AI-driven advertising provides several unique business benefits for advertisers, such as developing personalized advertising messages with enhanced impact and increasing financial returns (Reisenbichler et al., 2022). As a result, generative AI ushered in enormous opportunities for many companies (e.g., Google, Amazon, Meta) in their advertising practices (Osadchaya et al., 2024). Especially in China, traditional advertising technology is difficult to sustain under the impact of intelligent technologies represented by generative AI. Generative AI, as a prominent technological representative, has become an important force in disrupting the advertising industry ecosystem (Kshetri et al., 2020). Currently, the market size of artificial intelligence advertising is rapidly expanding globally, and it is expected to reach $1.3 trillion in the next decade(Statista, 2023). It is also predicted that almost one-third of brands messages are going to be designed by generative AI by 2025 (Gartner, 2023), indicating its tremendous potential in advertising and marketing industry.

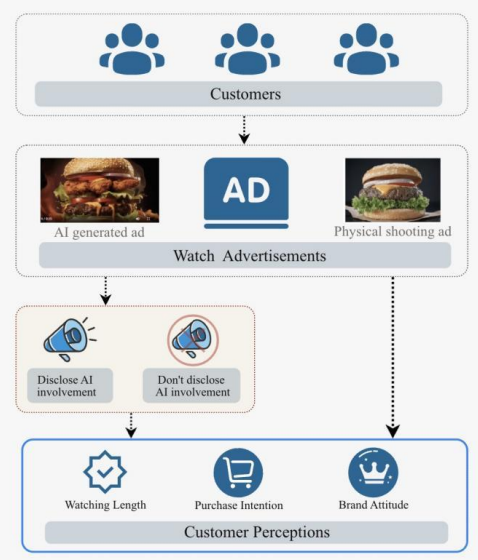

Figure 1 Scenario description

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Despite potential benefits brought by generative AI-driven advertisements for the supply side (i.e., advertisers), how the demand side (i.e., consumers) respond to advertisement and brands once they recognize generative AI's involvement in advertisement creation is still unanswered. One way to inform consumers of AI's involvement in advertising is through disclosure alongside the advertisement (Wu et al., 2024). Nevertheless, there is ongoing debate among practitioners on whether and how to disclose AI's involvement to consumers. Some advertisers inform consumers clearly when AI is involved in creating advertisement content. For example, consumers were told that AI generated the script of a Lexus commercial after analyzing prior automobile advertisement (Griner, 2018). While in some other cases, consumers remained unnotified about AI's contribution to advertisement. For example, although Alibaba has utilized its content creation AI (named Luban) to design millions of banner advertisement during its shopping festival (Alibaba Cloud, 2020), consumers were unaware of this as no disclosure was presented.

The divergent choice reflects a dilemma that firms face in disclosing the involvement of AI in all industries including advertising. On the one hand, disclosing AI's involvement in advertising may hinder companies from gaining the full business value of AI considering the possibility of customer pushback (Brüns & Meißner, 2024). This is because some AI technologies, like deepfake, can create content of people and products that do not exist. Such AI-created content has the potential to spread false information that misleads consumers (Cheguri, 2023), thus induce negative consumer responses. Prior literature has shown that awareness of the falsity of an AI-generated face negatively effects donators' empathy and donation intentions (Arango et al., 2023). Disclosing the chatbot identity in conversational advertising sharply decreases consumers' purchase (Luo et al., 2019). While on the other hand, consumers are entitled to know whether it is an AI or a human that create the advertisement account of business ethics. There is also an increasing call for transparency in generative AI adoption. For example, TikTok (2023) has begun to enforce the disclosure of AI usage whenever this technology is automatically detected.

Against this backdrop, investigation into the impact of disclosing AI identity and manipulating the best way to disclose AI involvement have become important issues (Wu et al., 2024). Although research efforts have been put into investigating consumer responses to AI versus human design ((Arango et al., 2023; Brüns & Meißner, 2024), they do not provide adequate evidence of whether or not to disclose AI's involvement or AI identity in content creation activity and how consumer respond to such disclosure. Besides, most of these research has focused on static advertisement and designs (e.g., Brüns & Meißner, 2024), few of them has paid attention to advertisement in video, despite its prominence in advertising. This lack of knowledge impedes advertisers from understanding the impact of generative AI on customer behavior and developing effective advertising strategies that maximize the benefits of generative AI while mitigates its potential negative consequences (Wu et al., 2024). This shortcoming in existing literature leads to the first research question:

RQ1: ***How do consumers respond to video advertisement once they recognize AI' s involvement?***

Besides, the way to alleviate the potential undesirable effect of AI's involvement disclosure has received scant attention, especially from the perspective of disclosure timing. Timing strategy has been evidenced to be effective in conversational advertising (Luo et al., 2019) and sponsorship (Campbell et al., 2012) contexts. Thus, the next question is:

RQ2: ***How the timing of disclosure of AI's involvement in advertising will affect consumers' responses?***

To answer the proposed research questions, we will consult the signaling theory. According to signaling theory, when recipients possess notably less message than the signalers, the recipients would employ signals to deduce to lower information asymmetry (Spence, 1973). Signal is information that is conveyed by the signaler to the recipient, revealing unobservable attributes of a product, service, or organization (Connelly et al., 2011). In this research, the disclosure of AI usage in advertising serves as a signal to deduce the advertisement company's information disclosure behavior. In this paper, we will discuss three experimental studies.

2. Literature review

2.1. AI in advertising

Constrained by cost control, and fueled by the convenience of audience access, the advertising industry is transitioning from traditional forms to AI dominance (Campbell et al., 2021). Furthermore, generative AI brings about innovation in advertising by creating novel advertisements based on prompts (Brüns & Meißner, 2024).

Research on AI in advertising mainly consists of two streams. The first one focuses on the way to utilize AI in advertising. Many studies included in this research stream are conducted from the technical perspective to explain how AI generates advertisement content. For example, Qin and Jiang (2019) suggest the steps for AI participating in advertising production. As AI

generating text came out first, Wang et al. (2019) develop a smart personalized advertising generation system that suits each customer's unique need to custom advertisement content intelligently. Moreover, Campbell et al. (2021) propose the use of deepfake could reshape advertising production, and they believe that deepfakes that can change people's appearance, gender, or voice will make a potentially dramatic difference in how advertisements are created by people. With the emergence of generative AI, brands can automate the advertisement creation process and facilitate content creation production (Brüns & Meißner, 2024). Generative AI enabled image generator can elevate user preferences infusing synthetic content with diverse artistic styles (Tigre Moura et al., 2023). In addition to assisting advertisement creation, AI is also capable of promoting the automation of the media buying process (Chen et al., 2019). Meanwhile, AI can help enhance the advertisement placement (Wu et al., 2024).

The second stream mainly discusses the impact of AI in advertising. Advanced AI advertising supports high-level personalization, which in turn leads to enhanced attitudes and purchase intentions (Campbell et al., 2021). AI enables brands to create innovative and profitable designs, significantly improving time management and labor productivity (Lee & Kim, 2024).

However, most of these studies have focused on static advertisements, rather than video advertisements. With the recent development of generative AI, it has been able to promote the generation of video advertisements and bring greater opportunities to the advertising industry. Nevertheless, given the relative novelty of generative AI, few of studies have examined the utilization of generative AI in video advertising, opening up opportunities for future research.

2.2 Consumer response to AI in advertising

Yahoo has released new research named "Trust through Transparency: The Future of Artificial Intelligence and Advertising", which surveyed more than 1200 consumers and 350 advertisers from the United States(Yahoo, 2024). Surprisingly, the results imply that consumers and advertisers hold different attitudes towards AI in advertising. Although 77% of advertisers have a positive view of AI, only 38% of consumers hold the same attitude. In addition, the study also found that 53% of people are not aware of the company's adoption of AI in advertising, indicating that brands have the chance to form consumer trust in AI by publicly disclosing their technology usage to consumers.

Academics have suggested that consumer's attitudes toward AI in advertising are mixed. On the one hand, AI-powered advertisements are considered less trustworthy (Brüns & Meißner, 2024). Taking the example of charity donation advertisements generated by AI, it is true that falsehood can have a negative impact on donator's empathy and donation intention (images generated by AI) (Arango et al., 2023). This is reasonable because of the presence of algorithm aversion among human (Dietvorst et al., 2015) and the perception of AI' s dark sides (Cheng et al., 2022). On the other hand, the perception of the positive side of AI is likely to give consumers a positive attitude toward AI-created advertisements. For instance, perceived machine heuristic of AI boosted consumer appreciation of AI-created advertisements (Wu & Wen, 2021).

For the nature of advertising, informationality refers to how much useful information the content conveyed by an advertisement can provide, and whether it can meet the needs of the audience or solve their problems (Yoo & MacInnis, 2005), while interactivity refers to the degree of interaction between an advertisement and its audience, including audience participation, feedback, and interaction methods, which will all affect consumers' attitudes towards advertising (Fortin & Dholakia, 2005). Taking short videos in the AI era as an example, the informational and interactive nature of short video advertising content are positively associated with consumer perceived trust, perceived pleasure, and perceived usefulness, which in turn positively influence consumer purchase intention (Lu et al., 2023).

The AI revolution in the advertising industry will eventually arrive, and the attitude of consumers towards advertising is crucial (Ford et al., 2023). However, there is relatively little research exploring whether and how the adoption of generative AI for creating video advertisements affects customer reactions and consumer-brand relationship (Wahid et al., 2023).

2.3 Effects of disclosing AI's involvement

With the progression of generative AI that blurs the line between advertisements crafted by AI and those created by humans, recent scholarly attention has shifted toward examining the implications of revealing AI's identity or involvement in advertisement creation (Wu et al., 2024).

Disclosing AI's involvement generally leads to changed consumer evaluation and behavioral reactions (Luo et al., 2019). On the one hand, such disclosure may trigger unfavorable consumer responses. For example, consumers' perceived ethicality decreases when they are informed that the restaurant has used robot chef because they may have a feeling of deception (Zhu & Zhang, 2023). Disclosing AI identity before the conversation lowers customer's purchase rates by almost 80%, even though the undisclosed AIs are as

professional as proficient workers. This is because AI is considered to lack competence and empathy (Luo et al., 2019). AI identity disclosure also leads to unethical behaviors (Li et al., 2024). If the feedback provider is disclosed as AI, employee job performance will decline (Tong et al., 2021). Cheng et al. (2022) have also found chatbot identity disclosure negatively moderate the impact of perceived empathy on trust.

On the other hand, AI's involvement in advertisements can lead to positive effects. For instance, advertisements generated by AI were found to be more effective in enhancing the intention to visit, particularly when advertisements employ rational appeals (Song et al., 2024). Therefore, the inconsistent findings regarding the impact of AI identity disclosure open up opportunities for both academics and advertisers to examine whether to disclose AI's involvement in advertising field

In addition, the disclosure timing is also important in shaping consumer perception, which has been evidence in online crowdsourcing context (Bhargava et al., 2024). Luo et al. (2019) have found that disclosing chatbot identity before the chatbot-customer conversation decreases purchase rates more than in conditions where disclosing chatbot identity after the chatbot-customer conversation and after the decision. This can be attributed to the fact that consumers can build a positive impression during the initial one-minute interaction with the chatbot, thereby effectively mitigating the distrust towards the chatbot.

However, little is known about whether and when disclosing AI's involvement in advertising will affect consumers' engagement in advertising.

3. Hypotheses development

3.1 Disclosing AI involvement in advertising and consumer reactions

According to signaling theory, we predict that information about advertisement creation identity, either generative AI or human, acts as a pivotal signal that affects consumer reactions. Generative AI advertising disclosure is assumed to be a critical signal because it may help consumers distinguish AI created content from other human created content.

Conventionally, advertisement creation is considered a human-dominant area because design requires great creativity, which is considered a uniquely human resource (Lee & Kim, 2024). Besides, creativity, a salient factor in advertising industry, is paramount in building brand identity (Roggeveen et al., 2021). However, Magni et al. (2023) has demonstrated that visual artwork generated by AI is perceived as less creative by consumers compared to art produced by human creators, implying that the general public associates creative content generation with a uniquely human capability. Besides, AI is considered incapable of fully feeling or thinking (Bigman & Gray, 2018), which leads to a belief that AI lacks the essential human attributes crucial for creating content that profoundly connects with consumer's identity-related desires (Brüns & Meißner, 2024).

Furthermore, people suspect that AI may fabricate content and exaggerate the role of the product. Thus, they doubt that the advertisement involving AI whether has a real promotional role and choose to interrupt the advertisement, resulting in shorter viewing time. In addition, people may think that the brand is insincere and therefore will lower their attitude towards the brand and purchase intention. Based on this, we posit that:

H1. Consumers respond less positively to the advertisement when they learned that AI's involvement in the advertisement.

3.2 Perceived authenticity

Perceived authenticity refers to the degree to which an advertisement looks genuine, true, and real (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). For products and brands, authenticity is crucial in establishing robust identity and connections with consumers (Campagna et al., 2022). This is reasonable because individuals often pursue authentic experiences, such as following authentic brands, with the anticipation of identity benefits (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). Thus, perceived authenticity can enhance an ad's persuasiveness (Campbell et al., 2021), and ultimately positively influence consumer's reactions, such as brand attitude, purchase intention, and brand sales (Becker et al., 2018; Carsana & Jolibert, 2018).

Products' authenticity perception is related to how content is created. In general, authenticity is perceived to be diminished in products crafted by AI compared to those designed by humans (Lee & Kim, 2024). Conventionally, advertisement creation is considered a human-dominant area. However, generative AI, designed to produce novel content and design, frequently receive skepticism about their performance in creation activity. It also encounters skepticism from individuals who question the trustworthiness and credibility of its creations. This skepticism underscores a broader perception of diminished authenticity associated with AI-generated content, coupled with concerns over heightened artificiality or manipulation, thus casting doubts on its credibility. Consumers generally exhibit unfavorable attitudes toward falsity in advertisements (Arango et al., 2023). The false consciousness generated by consumers, namely the inference of manipulative intentions, often hinders the

goals of advertisers (Cotte et al., 2005; Small & Loewenstein, 2003). Thus, due to declined authenticity perceptions in generative AI created advertisements, consumers tend to present fewer positive attitudes and engage less with advertisements and products. Therefore, we posit that:

H2. Disclosing AI's involvement in advertising decreases the extent of perceived authenticity, which, in turn, reduces watching length, and purchase intention, and brand attitude.

3.3 Differential effects of disclosure timing

The moment at which an AI involvement disclosure is presented in a video advertisement decides when it primes the AI contribution in an advertisement. It also determines the amount of time viewers have to process the video content. On the one hand, the divergent impact of disclosure timing on consumer behaviors can be explained by the priming effect. Priming effect posits that activated concepts can mold cognitive processing and evaluations (Roskos-Ewoldsen et al., 2009). When revealed upfront, an AI involvement disclosure operates akin to a prime, amplifying focus on the impending advertisement. This heightened awareness may lead consumers to more readily discern the falsity aspect of the advertisement. On the other hand, because of consumers' algorithm-averse tendencies, they are no longer willing to spend time watching advertisements made by AI. Consequently, an early disclosure's priming influence may wane before its benefits fully materialize. Conversely, disclosures positioned post-ad, following the advertising content, lack this priming capacity as they occur outside the immediate information processing window, thereby reducing their efficacy and do not influencing consumer's process in advertisement content. Based on this, we posit that:

H3. An AI involvement disclosure prior to the video advertisement has a larger effect on reducing watching length, purchase intention, and brand attitude than a disclosure after the video advertisement.

The research model is shown in Figure 2.

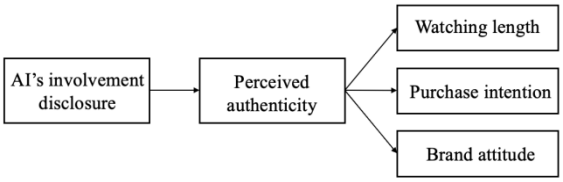

Figure 2. Research model

4. Research design

Three experiments will be conducted to test the hypotheses. Experiment 1 aims to verify H1 by examining the influence of AI involvement disclosure on customer reactions. Experiment 2 builds on this and further investigate the mediation mechanism of perceived authenticity, testing H2. The objective of Experiment 3 is to examine whether the effect of AI involvement disclosure in advertising contingent upon disclosure timing, thus provides us with a strategy to mitigate consumer's negative responses. The overview of the three studies in presented in Figure 3.

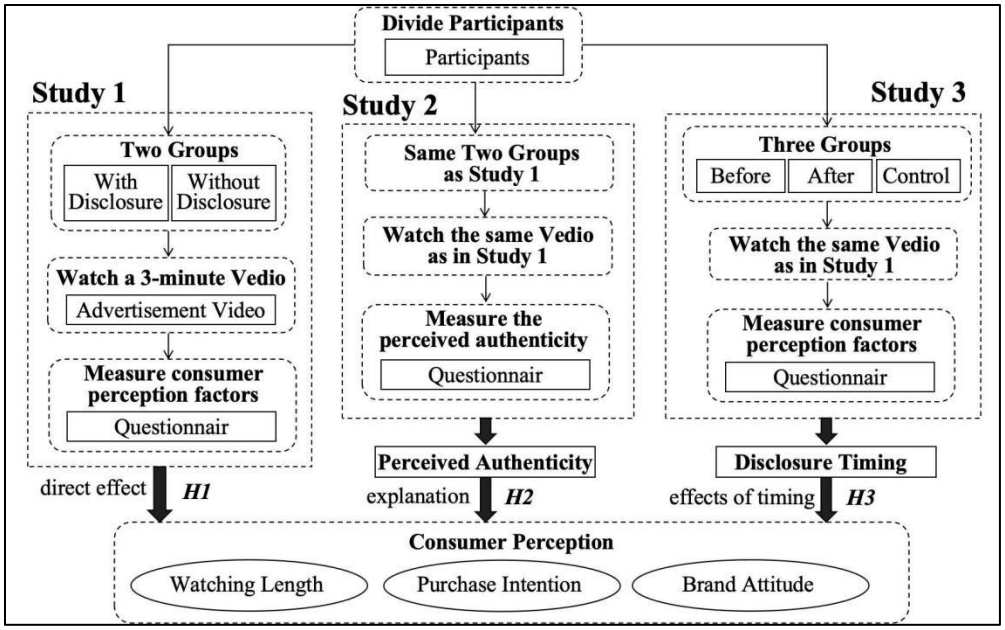

Figure 3. Overview of research framework

4.1 Study 1

This experiment offers a basic examination of whether AI involvement disclosure affects customer perceptions with a single-factor design. Participants will be randomly separated into two experimental groups (AI's involvement disclosure: present vs. control) and then watch a 3-minute AI-created advertisement video, which is released by McDonald's to advertise its food. Participants can stop watching whenever they want. In the group with disclosure, participants will be informed that 'generative AI was involved in the creation of this advertisement video' before watching the video. Afterward, combining the watching length of the video, a questionnaire will be used to measure the perceived credibility, purchase intention, and other consumer perception factors.

4.2 Study 2

This experiment attempts to explain the underlying reason for the direct effects of AI involvement disclosure on consumer perception. Participants in both groups will watch the same advertisement video as in Study 1 and then complete a questionnaire focused on the perceived authenticity survey.

Building on the results of Study 1, Study 2 will further analyze the mediating mechanisms of perceived authenticity in the impact of AI involvement disclosure on consumer perception, providing possible explanations for the different perceptual behaviors of participants while watching the advertisement video.

4.3 Study 3

Study 3 will more closely examine the impact of the disclosure timing, so as to explore how to mitigate consumers' negative perception as much as possible while protecting their rights.

This experiment will adopt a single-factor design (AI's involvement disclosure: before vs. after vs. control). Participants will be randomly assigned to one of the treatment conditions and then watch a video advertisement as in Study 1. In the before group, the AI involvement will be disclosed before the video starts, while in the after group, AI involvement will be disclosed after the participants close the video.

To measure the perceived authenticity, we will adopt from Beverland and Farrelly (2010) with five items. Watch Time will be estimated using the duration time. To measure the purchase intention and brand attitude, we will consult the measurement items from Lee et al. (2017).

5. Discussions

5.1 Implications for research

This ongoing research will afford several timely contributions to the extant literature. First, revealing customers' reactions toward AI-generated video advertisements enriches the existing literature regarding the impact of generative AI in advertising. Existing research has paid much attention to AI-generated static advertisement (Arango et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2024). Our study goes beyond by stepping into the field of video advertisement, expanding the scope of research, not limited in text and static advertising any more. To the best of our knowledge, our work is one of the initial attempts to investigate consumer reactions to AI created video content when AI's involvement in advertising is disclosed. AI created and AI assisted content are likely to play critical roles in the future of advertising, while our knowledge of the impact of consumer recognition of AI's involvement in advertising is still scant, in part due to its novelty. Therefore, the current research is expected to add to the literature regarding the impacts of disclosing AI identity, especially in advertising context.

Second, we aim to investigate whether perceived authenticity mediates the relationship between disclosure and consumer reactions to AI synthetic advertisements, providing a potential alternative explanation for the effects. We will expand the research on the mechanisms by which AI disclosure affects consumers (Brüns & Meißner, 2024). Specifically, we try to understand the underlying mechanisms that drive consumer responses to AI-generated content and how these perceptions can potentially influence their attitudes and purchasing intentions.

Third, as we expect AI synthetic advertisements may have negative effects in terms of consumer watching length, brand attitude, and purchase willingness, we propose to adjust the disclosure timing to mitigate such negative effects. This research effort would clarify the potential conditions for minimizing the negative impact of AI involvement disclosure.

5.2 Implications for practice

Practically, this work will provide insights for advertisers and firms. Specifically, for advertisers, this study is of great significance to the advertising industry related to AI and generative AI. Firstly, this

research provides profound insights and suggestions for advertising practitioners and firms, particularly regarding the potential negative impact of AI disclosure on consumer trust and brand awareness. Our research indicates that the disclosure of AI in advertising may affect watching time, brand attitude, and purchasing decisions. Therefore, advertising practitioners should be cautious when considering the involvement of AI, especially in controlling the timing of disclosure, in order to minimize negative impacts and maximize the prospect of AI in improving advertising effectiveness and efficiency.

Secondly, from the perspective of deeper theoretical evidence, this study provides a predictive framework to help explain consumer reactions to AI disclosure, providing important basis for advertising practitioners to evaluate and formulate business models and strategies using AI technology. Therefore, for advertisers seeking to optimize disclosure strategies and fully utilize AI to drive advertising effectiveness, understanding and applying these evaluations and insights is crucial. In summary, this study can be seen as a practical guide for advertising practitioners, providing them with profound insights and guidance when dealing with and utilizing AI.

5.3 Limitations and future work

This work still has some limitations. First, we only provided the research design and framework, but have not provided detailed study results in this research due to the time limit. Second, this study design is set in food industry context and in the developing countries which is China, where the future work could investigate into other types of products, such as make-ups, electronics, and also in different countries. Besides, the difference effects between hedonic product and utilitarian product are worthy to be explored. Third, with the maturity of generative AI, consumer's attitude towards it is likely to change over time. We encourage longitudinal research to track consumers' response to generative AI created advertisements to provide a more interesting understanding for GAI enabled digital economy.

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