

Travel Journalism in the Era of Globalization

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Abstract

The media these days tend to go global and influence the people from around the world than being focused on the local audience only. Access to the Internet in different parts of the world has made it easier for the journalists to reach out to the groups that were not possible before. The debate on whether the news media has gone global or not is still on. Some argue that the news media has been more in favor of glocalization than the globalization. Others think that the media is surely going global these days. This article would not make an effort to take a side of this debate. The purpose of this article is to look at the global media from the perspective of the travel journalism. Travel journalism can serve as an important bridge in bringing the culture, lifestyle, and history of a part of the world to another part of the world. This article would look at different issues related to travel journalism through literature review. The case studies would be used to answer some of the questions regarding travel journalism in the global media.

KEYWORDS: travel journalism, globalization, global media, travel articles

Introduction

People have always travelled. Traveling is not a new phenomenon. However, the boom of travel and tourism industry in the past decades has made travelling more commercial than ever before. According to World Tourism Organization (WTO), over the past 40 years the tourism industry has expanded 7% a year in arrivals and 12% a year in receipts which is a growth record unmatched by any other economic sector. (Herbote and Goldbeg, 1995: xiii as cited in Fursich and Kavoori, 2001, p. 151). These days people are not travelling locally but also internationally. People from the west are not the only travellers but the travellers from the east have also been growing (Fursich and Kavoori, 2001). With so much traveling going on in the world, people have started writing about their travel experience and also reading about the travel experiences of others. Travel journalism has emerged as lifestyle journalism.

The purpose of this article is to look at different aspects of travel journalism through literature review. The literature review would lead to questions related to travel journalism and would try to find answers to the questions. The article would then look at few examples of travel journalism and their contribution to the global travel journalism. Those articles would be a guide to understanding the way travel journalism is reported in the era of globalization and the concerns and problems related to it.

Defining Travel Journalism

Before going any further about travel journalism, it is important to answer the most fundamental question. So what is travel journalism? It is hard to exactly define what travel journalism is because it can include multiple aspects of travel such as culture, history, ecology, business, recreation, adventures and others. “Travel journalism, which is

neither as independent or neutral as news reports can be, nor can it be classed as purely commercial, would probably be situated across these two types of image formation” (Hanusch, 2010, p. 70). The subjective orientation of travel journalism is a reason why travel journalism has not been studied seriously by the journalism academics. Good (2013) finds that travel journalism is more similar to ‘serious’ journalism than it is different. Just like ‘serious’ forms of journalism “travel journalism warrants attention as documentation of the shared assumptions between journalists and readers about what representations are relevant from beyond their borders” (p. 296). The debate on whether travel journalism should be taken as seriously as the other hard news journalism is still on. But one cannot ignore the fact that travel journalism and hard news journalism can be very different. A good definition of travel journalism can be helpful to give a perspective to travel journalism. However, the multiple aspects of travel journalism make it hard to give a definition that would include everything that travel journalism represents.

Soares (2009) writes about the intersection of travel journalism with literary journalism. Since both travel journalism and literary journalism in some manner are about interactions with other kinds of expression they share a lot in common (p. 18). Travel journalists often give subjective accounts of the place they visit which is closer to the literary journalism (Fursich, 2002). Soares (2009) writes that there is also a debate between who is a tourist and who is a traveller. “Tourists are the beneficiaries of the advent of mass tourism promoted by such agents as Tomas Cook, whereas travellers on a quest are the heirs of the learned traveller doing the Grand Tour for educational purposes to the ancient sites of European civilization” (p. 19). Soares (2009) finds the travel journalists closer to the tourists than the travelers because both tend to see the

world from a far distant and do not engage in a personal level. Soares (2009) further writes that the travel journalists are the mediators between the familiar world of Us and foreign world of Other.

Dimensions of travel journalism

Different assessments of travel journalism among the journalists and researchers make it important to see what the dimensions of travel journalism can be. Hanusch (2010) has identified four dimensions of travel journalism; 1. the representation of foreign cultures: According to Hanusch (2010) the purpose of travel journalism's existence is to represent Otherness. However, he mentions that the research of travel article and travel shows have shown that they are more about the presenters than the locals at the destinations. Santos (2006) studied the major intercultural communication themes highlighted in American travel writing. The study found that the travel hosts and writers speak for themselves than for the Other. 2. The ethics of travel journalism: Hansuch (2010) writes that since traveling costs money, the travel journalists have to rely on the sponsors from tourism industry to bear the cost of their travel. This reliance questions the ethics of the journalists who may be writing to please the sponsors than being objective in their articles. This is yet another challenge that travel journalism needs to overcome. 3. Travel journalism's market orientation: Travel journalists have to face the question of whether they are writing for entertainment or information. Hansuch (2010) brings out the important point of whether the audiences are looking for entertainment or information in travel articles or shows. Fursich (2002) writes that the lack of traditional journalism values such as objectivity, editorial independence, and public relevance is the reason why travel journalism has been often regarded as less in

‘quality.’ 4. Motivational aspects of travel journalism: Hanusch (2010) writes that motivation is an important dimension to examine, because it allows us to draw a link between the journalism literature’s notions of what constitutes journalism and tourism studies’ notions of what tourists want.

These four dimensions can be used to further study different aspects of travel journalism. More theoretical research in the area of travel journalism is needed to establish a strong foundation of literature in travel journalism.

Global representation in travel shows

Travel writing and travel shows have grown as a distinct beat of lifestyle journalism. The growing number of travel articles, travel magazines, travel blogs, and travel channels are the evidences to this growth. An analysis of travel media can help us to understand the impact of globalization in our day-to-day life (Fursich, 2009). While examining the three travel programs on global television Fursich (2009) found different aspects of travel these programs covered and represented. Three travel shows; Lonely Planet, Rough Guide, and Travelers all aired in the Travel Channel in the USA were assessed to study the global messages of these shows. Fursich (2009) had categorized these shows into three versions of travel: untourism, post-tourism and multicultural tourism. Lonely Planet was about a group of backpack travelers who frequently visited the Third World or formerly politically unstable countries. They had limited budget and wanted to experience the “real” culture of the place. The travelers sometimes had health related and other issues during the travel. They took an untourist approach and often criticized the capitalism and consumerism. However, their approach of untourism

contrasted the promotions of different airlines by the hosts and commercial breaks that provided “McDisney” versions of travel.

Another show was Rough Guide with a post-tourism tone. The show was concentrated on urban areas and cities. The hosts used irony and sarcasm to criticize the political, social, and economic situation of the country. The viewpoints of hosts were often inspired by Western experience and they tended to criticize the global urban living as a whole rather than distinguishing between “me” and “them.” The show took a more traditional journalistic approach using criticism and not providing any moral summary at the end. The show had a more pessimistic tone about tourism, which illustrated that there are problems in different parts of the globe and there is no escaping from such problems.

Travelers was a more mainstream travel show where the hosts came from different ethnic backgrounds carrying a multicultural tone. The hosts were happy travelers who enjoyed taking part in different local activities. The show avoided the conflict and celebrated difference. Although the hosts were supposed to be representing different ethnic backgrounds, they were more similar than different because all of them were second-generation Americans from different minority groups who related to each other more when they were in a faraway place.

These shows differed in the tone but they all reflected a Western perspective. “All shows ultimately hide the privileged and problematic situations of all tourists, travel show producers and the tourism industry in general when packaging culture as a commodity” (Furisch, 2009, p. 223). The shadow of Western perspective in travel shows or travel writing is not new. It has a historical implication. Fursich and Kavoori (2001)

write that the word ‘tourist’ is historically “linked to the travel of English gentlemen on a tour as part of their education and entertainment” (p. 155). This may be another reason why most of the travel articles and shows are dominated with a Western perspective of seeing the Other. The travel shows and travel writings in the America have generally been criticized for the dominant Western theme they carry. Such Western perspective overlooks the deeper characteristic of traveling, which is to know the Other.

With travel journalism operating in the international spectrum, it represents this era of global media and global journalism. “The term global relates to an increasing number of media workers who supply content to transnational media corporations and produce their content for a global market”(Fursich, 2002, p. 59). Travel journalism is about the experiences of journalists who go to places as tourists. The experiences and recommendations of those journalists who travel professionally can be helpful for the people who want to travel. In reporting or broadcasting about the places they visit, the travel journalists are creating the knowledge of Other. “The concept of constructing the Other should be transferred from a passive strategy of critique to an active strategy for change”(p. 65). Fursich (2002) suggests for new strategies for reporting on the other in this post-modern globalized era:

1. showing the production conditions of the programs;
2. providing space for other voices, and
3. working toward a fluid rather than a static and fixed television logic.

Furisch (2002) suggests that the travel shows should be more focused on the social, historical, political and economic contexts of travel. These strategies could help to develop sustained tourism projects in Third World Countries.

The domination of Western outlook in the travel journalism can be found in various researches. The article by Good (2013) takes a closer look at over 2000 travel pictures and captions that were collected in the ‘Why We Travel’ (WWT) of New York Times. The WWT first gives an impression of a diverse, personalized, varied and free global tourism. However, a closer inspection reveals a different story. A closer study shows that the diversity of WWT can be concentrated to a few themes; locals, poverty, nature and transport. Santos (2001) found three main underlying themes in the travel articles. 1. They looked after my needs and then went back: In this theme the host are there only to help the American guests to achieve their goals. Once the needs of the guests have been fulfilled the hosts are no longer in the frame. 2. All things American: Especially in Asia and the Middle East, American people, culture and ways of living serve as a comparative and standard model for discussions and observations regarding the host (p. 634). 3. Normative Masculinity Versus Constructed Femininity: Mostly in Asia, South America, and Africa findings suggest that to be a tourist implies both a certain position of advantage and manliness. The most relevant and paramount stories for these particular American readers are those which support their ways of living to help them make sense of the world and their place in it (p. 639). So the question is whether this tone of Western supremacy in the travel writings and travel shows represent the concept of globalization.

To understand this question and find an answer we should first seek to answer what globalization is. “Globalization is much more than buying and selling of foreign goods; some see it as a manifestation of a global communications revolution that is dissolving our sense of boundaries and how we perceive the world beyond the

shores”(Hachten, 2003, p. 265). Although globalization seeks to create a world of cultural collaboration, the Western media and pop culture has generally been transmitted to the East. Hatchen (2003) writes the Western culture has increasingly been dispersed to the rest of the world because of its media advancements. The brighter side of the globalization is the increase in the access to the news and information in the countries like India and China (p. 275). When the media has made it much easier to access the information from most part of the globe, journalism has the larger audience than ever before. “By global journalism I mean a system of newsgathering, editing and distribution not based on national or regional boundaries- where it is not expected that shared national or community citizenship is the common reference uniting newsmakers, journalists, and audience. (Reese, 2008, p. 242)” In this context the journalists are not writing or producing news for the citizens of a country but their focus is the citizens of the whole world. Reese (2008) writes that the shifting orientation from the vertical to the horizontal perspective of news coverage is a positive move toward the global journalism.

Can travel journalism be the face of globalized journalism? It is hard to answer the question as yes or no. There are some features of travel journalism that carry global message but there are others which are just purely Westernized in tone. The literature review leads us to the following questions to be answered.

RQ1: What are the most common themes of travel articles?

- a. What are the common themes in the travel articles written for the Western audience?
- b. What are the common themes in the travel articles written for the Eastern audience?

For the purpose of this article, we would look into few travel stories published in Western and Eastern news websites. The study would focus on the dimension, representation of other and global message in these articles.

Case Studies

In Rio and Sao Paulo, Go North: Article in The New York Times

The article is about the Zona Norte (North Zone) in two of the largest cities of Brazil, Rio and Sao Paulo, which is largely ignored by tourists in favor of Zonal Sul, the South Zone. The North Zone is ignored because of its association with poorer neighborhood and crimes. However, the travel writer takes a different approach and suggests through the article that the people visiting the city should also visit the North Zone. Some of the reasons that he gives why one should go North are the stadium Maracana which will host 2014 World Cup, the city's samba school that puts on their dynamic parades in the Sambadrome, beaches, some nice restaurants, and clubs that are packed even in the weekdays. These all come with a cheaper price tag in comparison to the South. This travel article tries to give a picture of less tourist visited area of the city. The writer asks the tourists to get out of the comfort zone and explore beyond the areas that are normally listed in travelogues. There were 13 comments in the article with mixed opinions. Some people agree to what the writer is saying but there are some who have had bad experience while traveling the North Zone that the writer is advocating. The article mostly points out the positive and ignores the negative aspects of the Northern part of the city.

This travel article takes a different stand than what is popular among the tourists. The writer suggests the travelers to be less paranoid and be more positive about the North

Zone. Listing all the good experiences one can have in the North, the writer encourages the tourists to give North Zone a shot. This is a bold stance the writer has taken by refusing to follow what most people do. This article can help increase tourism in the North and also wash off some negative reputation of the area. However, the article seems too biased by showing off only the positive features of the North.

Resort by a Lake, Fit for a Generalissimo. Sun Moon Lake, Taiwan: New York Times

This article is about a tourist destination, The Sun Moon Lake, in Taiwan. The writer figures out how it is getting more businesses in the form of visitors from mainland China. The Sun Moon Lake ropeway takes the travelers over two mountains and deposits them at the entrance to the Formosan Aboriginal Cultural Village. The village is more like a Disney park with roller coaster, gyro drop and concrete wild deer statues. Ita Thao which once belonged to aboriginal Thao people are few in number with fewer than 300 of them left in the island. The people are worried about the extinction of the culture and language of Ita Thao. The writer points out the three and four-star hotels in the lake with preference to Lalu which was designed by Australian architech Kerry Hill with a 200-foot infinity pool.

This article has a little bit of everything; it talks about the historical and cultural aspects of the lake and the island and how its transformation to a lavish tourist destination has displaced the aborigines of the place. The writer notes the Westernization of the Aboriginal Cultural Village which may have been a factor to attracting the tourists. The tourists have an opportunity to learn something about the cultural heritage of the place without having to sacrifice the comfort. This travel article can attract tourists who are

looking for a family vacation in the Asia. According to the article, the destination can be a one-stop for getting a close view of the culture of the island with the added benefit of a Disney park fun for the family. This article is honest in describing how converting the island in a tourist destination has taken away the soul of the island.

Celebrating in a ‘Land Time Forgot’ : The New York Times

This article is about a parade of ‘fire boats’ in Luang Prabang, Laos, a Buddhist celebration that marks the end of the rainy season. The writer notes that it is a World Heritage site and has grown as an international tourist destination since 1995, the year it was declared as a World Heritage Site. It is regarded as a land that time forgot. The writer cites people from different backgrounds; managing director at Delivering Asia Communications, a Bangkok-base public relations company, professor of religion at Bowdoin College in Maine, an artist and psychologist from Luang Prabang, a Sorbonne-educated descendant of Laos’s royal family as experts in different aspects of Luang Prabang. The writer also mentions about growth in the hotel rooms and more planned growth in the near future. The writer mentions how the tourism industry is flourishing in that part of the country and most of the tourists are from the United States with few Asian and European visitors. The article discusses the procedure of the rituals in the festival and its significance.

Written in the backdrop of a popular celebration ‘fire boats,’ the article also discusses other developments of Luang Prabang. The place has been called ‘the land time forgot’, but now the land is catching up with time. With different infrastructures of modernization such as hotels and airport flights Luang Prabang can be an ideal

destination for the Westerners who can experience the culture of the place and also have all the comforts available for them.

In Namibia, Conservation and Tourism Intersect.

This article is a wildlife tourism article in Namibia. The articles start with the description of Namibia women in cultural outfit. The writer mentions how the gift they brought for them such as cornmeal, tea, sugar and other supplies that is not typically found there made the women smile and be more friendly with the tourists. The article talks about an ambitious experiment in both community tourism and wildlife conservation known as communal conservancies, which has been a success. The writer also talks about the challenges the increasing number of tourists and wildlife has brought to the place. The writer further states how the local women have become used to the visitors. They make comfortable accommodation for the tourists for some money.

The article shows a picture of a remote African village in Namibia, which has been an example of a successful conservation camp. The travel to the village can be a great experience for the tourists who are interested in learning about the local people and seeing some wildlife. The article is written for the Western tourists and the tone is reassuring.

Trip tips: Melbourne, Australia's vibrant cultural capital: Hindustan Times

The travel article is about Melboune, the second biggest city of Australia. The article begins with comparing the culture, galleries, cafes, and restaurants of Melbourne with Europe. The article talks about the arts and culture of the city and the eateries around the city. The article also notes the city for Australian open and for other sports like cricket and rugby.

The article is basically a description of Melbourne and its tourist attractions. By comparing it with Europe, the writer is trying to add authenticity to the city's culture. The article is written for those people in South Asia who would be able to afford the travel and want to see what an Australian city is like.

Africa's undiscovered Jewel: Hindustan Times

This article is about the Makgadikgadi pans that lie in the heart of Botswana, in Southern Africa. This article is written for those who appreciate the natural beauty, unique wildlife and culture of Africa. The writer mentions in the beginning of the article that the place neither offer water, food or shelter and it is a minimal landscape with minimal life. However, the beauty is tremendous with an opportunity to encounter the wildlife of the place and also chance to meet the local bushmen in their undisturbed habitat.

This article is not aimed at people who are looking for family vacations but want to spend some time in a faraway land in Africa. There is a quick info on how to get there, where to stay at, affordable place to stay at, and what the best experience of the place is like.

Impressions of Poland: The Seoul Times

This article is about the author's visit to Poland with a companion Irit who was born in Poland but left the land for Israel in 1957 during the Communist regime headed by Wladislaw Gomulka. Irit's fluency of Polish language makes getting around easier for the author.

The author's reason for visiting Poland is his association with the Jew heritage. The author mentions how they were reluctant to visit the place first but did not encounter

any negative experience during the visit. The author talks about the different historical places that they visited in Poland. The author also compares and contrasts the people in Poland to the people in Israel and also the economic aspects of two countries. The author finds that the young Polish couple have fewer kids than the Israeli couples, the Polish teenagers are not as loud and there are no fat people to be seen in Poland. The author also notices that the people are polite and helpful. In the end the author mentions that Poland is a good place to visit but one should know the history of the place before heading to that direction. The author adds that the Polish language is not easy either.

This article published in The Seoul Times is written by Zvi November, who grew up in New York and currently is an activist in Israel's Media Watch and other civic bodies. The author makes the travel story personal by linking it to his Jewish origin. The article highlights the historical places to visit in Poland if one is interested in the Jewish culture. The article also touches on the historical background of the country and how Germans, Russians, Swedes and Australians have repeatedly invaded it. This article appears in The Seoul Times but is aimed at the larger audience, mainly at those who are either Jews or have some interest in the Jewish culture. The article is not all praise about Poland nor it is all-critical about it, but the writer has balanced the good and bad of the place and have left to the readers to decide if they want to visit the place.

Is Philippines Dangerous Spot for Tourists? : The Seoul Times

This article highlights the dangerous situations in Philippines for South Korean. The article gives several statistics to prove that there is an increase in robbery and killing of South Koreans in the Philippines. The article also uses direct quotes from the South Koreans who had been to the Philippines and had been tormented by the local mobs or

the policemen. The article points out that the reason for the increase in the crime against tourists in the Philippines is because of the lack of domestic security and the long going civil war in the country. The article specifies that the South Korean tourists are attacked the most because the local criminal groups see South Korean tourists as having a large sum of cash with them for enjoying the local sex and gambling.

This article is posted in the travel section of The Seoul Times. The article gives all the reasons possible why the Philippines is a dangerous tourist destination for South Koreans. It discourages the South Koreans from visiting the Philippines because of the unsafe environment. There is no positive aspect of the Philippines highlighted in the article. It frames the Philippines as a country full of local criminal gangs and corrupt policemen who are always hungry for money from the tourists. It also frames the Philippines as a tourist destination for those looking for sex and gambling.

Discussion

Eight articles, four in The New York Times, two in Hindustan Times, and two in The Seoul Times were discussed. The New York Times was chosen to represent the Western perspective of travel article and The Hindustan Times and The Seoul Times were chosen to represent the Eastern perspective of travel article. The travel articles in Western and Eastern newspapers helped us to look at the way Other is perceived in different parts of the world.

As Hanusch (2010) has mentioned, one of the dimensions of travel journalism is to represent Otherness. The four articles of The New York Times were set in different parts of Asia, Africa, and South America. Three of articles were written mostly for the family tourists. The articles assured that the place would be comfortable enough for the

tourists where they can also experience the local culture. This resembles the conclusion Santos (2006) had derived in her travel article that in American travel writing the travel hosts and the writers speak for themselves than the others. The article on Brazil was different from the others in that it encouraged the travelers to take some time to visit the North Zone of Rio which is not considered to be safe. Here the writer of the article is taking the untourism approach (Furisch, 2009). Taking an untourism approach, the writer sets to explore the ‘real’ culture of the part of Rio which is often neglected as a tourist attraction. This article is written for a traveler than a tourist (Soares, 2009). A tourist would stay away from a part of the destination which has a bad reputation but a traveler would be keener to experience that part. It may look like the travel articles in The New York Times cover a diverse subject because of different countries and continents that are represented in the travel articles. However, these articles boil down to the few common themes like locals, poverty, nature, and transport (Good, 2013). However, on the positive side, the coverage of different nations from different parts of the world in The New York Times travel articles can be an example of the global coverage through travel writing. As Furisch (2009) has stated, travel media and travel articles can be used to analyze the impact of globalization in our daily life. These travel articles published in The New York Times do encourage the readers to explore the world beyond the shores (Hatchen, 2003).

One of the articles in Hindustan Times was written on what one can do in the big city of Australia. The article gave an emphasis on the rich cultural experience the city has to offer. The perspective of Otherness can be seen in this article as well. It wants to assure the readers that the destination place has rich cultural values. This may be because culture holds a high value in the East. Here what Santos (2011) found in the research on

the travel articles in the West can be put in the Eastern perspective. In the articles on the Melbourne, the Eastern culture and values serve as a standard model for describing the host. The article on Makgadikgadi was aimed at the people who are into wildlife and do not mind sacrificing their comfort for the experience. This is closer to the objective value of the professional journalism. The article gives a factual image of what the place is like and leaves it on the readers to decide whether or not they want to visit the place. Hanusch (2010) has noted that travel journalism can be positioned between the characteristics of hard news and commercial journalism. In the case of the article on Makgadiskgadi the article is still soft news but at the same time leans towards objective journalism.

The two articles in The Seoul Times were written about Poland and the Philippines. The article on Poland focused on the historical and cultural aspects of Poland. This article is a subjective description of what the writer experiences in Poland and what the writer's perception of the destination was before going there. This article is closer to literary journalism where the journalists often give subjective accounts of the place (Furisch, 2002). The article on the Philippines focused on the theme, why South Koreans should not visit the country. Here the perception of Other (Hanusch, 2010; Soares, 2009; Furisch, 2002) is negative. Destination country, the Phillipines is looked into only from the negative light. For this article Furisch (2002) would suggest that the construction of looking at the Other should be changed from the passive approach of Other to the active approach of change (p. 65). These two articles in The Seoul Times contrast very much from each other. One is a travel article and another is more like why not to travel article. These two contrasting themes of the articles may have existed because they are talking about two different places.

The research paper looks into only eight articles because of the limitation of time and scope of the paper. The findings of this paper cannot be generalized. However, this can be a point of start for the future research on travel journalism.

Conclusion

In conclusion, travel journalism in the East and West do carry different themes. The travel articles in The New York Times focused on the culture and aborigines of the destination. But at the same time, the articles made sure that the place had the comforts that the Westerners are used to. There are some articles that do encourage the travelers to get out of their travel zone and enjoy the destination for what it is. The travel articles in Hindustan Times try to assure the readers that the place they are visiting in the West do have a rich culture. Culture is an important part of life for the people in the East and the travel writers strongly emphasize the cultural significance of the host countries. The two articles on The Seoul Times were very different from each other. The article on Poland highlighted the cultural and historical significance of the place. However, the article on the Philippines only discussed the dark side of the Philippines.

Discussing these travel articles from the perspective of global journalism, we see that these articles discuss the assumptions from beyond the borders (Good, 2013). Out of the four dimensions of travel journalism discussed by Hanusch (2010), the most prevalent was the representation of foreign culture in both the Eastern and Western travel articles. The example articles reveal that travel journalism can lean towards objective or subjective description of the destination. Therefore, it would be better to categorize travel journalism outside the black-n-white scope of professional or commercial journalism

Hanusch (2010). Since there is a flow of tourists and travelers both from the east and the west (Furisch and Kavoori, 2001) the travel articles are getting popular in the east as well. However, during the research it was found that the newspapers in the east have more articles on the domestic travel destinations than the foreign ones. This may be because the Easterners did not start as early as the Westerners to travel to another part of the world for pleasure.

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