ISSN: 2395-1664 (ONLINE)
DOI: 10.21917/ijms.2026.0364

FACTORS DRIVING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY IN THE EV TWO-WHEELER SECTOR IN TELANGANA, INDIA

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Abstract

The electric vehicle (EV) industry has been significantly mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and addressing climate change by offering a sustainable alternative to fossil fuel-powered vehicles. Environmental concerns, cost savings, government incentives, range anxiety, and brand image were key determinants of consumer decisions (Raju S, et al. 2024) [1]. This study is undertaken to investigate factors affecting customer satisfaction towards EV two-wheeler and explore the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty in EV two-wheeler sector in Telangana. Applying proven models such as SERVQUAL and Oliver's disconfirmation theory, the research sought insights to enhance customer-centric strategies and inform policymakers and EV businesses. Comprehensive literature review and rigorous methodology examined the interplay between service quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. Simple random and convenience sampling methods were applied to collect the responses from the respondents who are using EV-two-wheeler in the Warangal urban district of Telangana State. The Chi-square test ($\chi 2$) was applied to determine the association between customer satisfaction, loyalty, and service quality parameters. Findings indicated a significant correlation between customer satisfaction, loyalty, and service quality. Key determinants of customer satisfaction and loyalty include employee engagement, service reliability, the appearance of physical facilities and promised product features specifically in terms of mileage concern and life span of battery.

Keywords:

Electric Vehicle (EV), Two-Wheeler, Service Quality, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty

1. INTRODUCTION

The electric vehicle (EV) revolution is reshaping global transportation systems, driven by the urgent need to combat climate change, reduce air pollution, and transition to sustainable energy sources. Among EV categories, two-wheelers have gained prominence due to their affordability, efficiency, and suitability for urban commutes. Countries like China, Japan, and European nations have achieved significant milestones in EV adoption by focusing on robust infrastructure, government incentives, and innovation in battery technology. For instance, China leads the global market in electric two-wheeler sales, attributed to substantial government support and technological advancements. Similarly, countries in Europe have adopted stringent emission norms and incentivized EV purchases, fostering a favorable environment for EV proliferation.

In India, the EV sector is expanding rapidly, with the government's ambitious goals under the scheme of Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME). Telangana, one of India's progressive states, has witnessed remarkable growth in the electric two-wheeler market, supported by policies like subsidies, tax exemptions, and investments in charging infrastructure. However, consumer satisfaction and loyalty rely on multiple factors, in terms of service quality, product reliability, and customer-centric strategies and delivery of promising product features. Customer satisfaction and loyalty are largely determined by service quality, as has long been acknowledged in many industries. The connection between the quality of services rendered and the satisfaction of customers has been the subject of extensive research over the past three decades. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry's seminal SERVQUAL model, had developed in 1985, revolutionized the understanding of service quality measurement. Their research focused on the gap between what consumers expected and how they perceived the quality of services they received. It highlighted that the level of customer satisfaction was heavily dependent on the quality of services provided [2]. This framework marked a significant milestone in recognizing the importance of matching service quality with customer expectations. It became a cornerstone for future studies in service quality, enabling businesses to gain deeper insights into customer needs and expectations, which in turn improved customer satisfaction and fostered loyalty. Researchers like [3] extended SERVQUAL. They introduced The SERVPERF model with the idea that customers evaluate service quality based on their observations of service delivery, such as the speed, accuracy, reliability, and responsiveness of service providers. This approach was seen as more rigorous and actionable for businesses, as it allowed them to focus on concrete aspects of service delivery that could be measured and improved.

Customer satisfaction is vital as it directly influences a business's success. Customers who are satisfied are more inclined to stay loyal, make repeat purchases, and recommend the company to others. Their positive experiences contribute to brand reputation and long-term profitability. Oliver's model proposed that customer satisfaction is influenced by three key factors: expectations, performance, and disconfirmation. It posits that customers form satisfaction judgments by comparing their pre-purchase expectations with their actual experiences (performance), leading to either positive or negative disconfirmation.

Dissatisfaction follows negative disconfirmation, whereas satisfaction follows positive disconfirmation. This model has had a profound impact on the study of customer satisfaction and has been instrumental in shaping modern approaches to understanding and managing customer perceptions and loyalty [4]. Kotler et al. were underscored that customer satisfaction is not merely a byproduct of business activities but a strategic imperative. It necessitates a deep understanding of customer needs, effective communication, and continuous efforts to deliver superior value. Ultimately, his insights have played a pivotal role in shaping the way businesses approach customer satisfaction and marketing in the modern era [5].

The electric two-wheeler sector is witnessing substantial growth globally, and India, including Telangana State, is no exception [6]. Electric vehicles (EVs) are instrumental in reducing carbon emissions and advancing sustainability, making it essential to understand how service quality influences customer satisfaction and loyalty. This study explores the complex interplay between service quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty in the EV two-wheeler sector. By addressing significant gaps in existing literature, it provides practical insights for industry stakeholders to enhance customer experience and drive growth in the EV market. By comparing global best practices and exploring regional dynamics, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of the evolving EV landscape. This study is crucial for aligning the electric two-wheeler sector in Telangana with sustainability goals, enhancing customer-centric strategies, and aiding policymakers and businesses in making informed decisions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 SERVQUAL

SERVQUAL has long served as a globally accepted standard for evaluating service quality, grounded in customer perceptions and satisfaction. It is structured around five core dimensions: tangibles, assurance, responsiveness, reliability, and empathy. Developed by [7], this model has been extensively utilized across various industries. Its framework emphasizes five critical aspects: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. As an alternative, [8] introduced SERVPERF, which focuses on performance-based measurement. The adaptability of SERVQUAL has ensured its continued relevance across diverse sectors [9], solidifying its position as a vital tool for service quality research.

2.2 SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

It has long been understood that a company's ability to provide high-quality services is essential to its ability to compete in a wide range of industries. Numerous scholarly works examined the aspects and consequences of service quality, as well as its intimate relationship to consumer satisfaction. Various Studies demonstrated that greater service quality leads to increased customer satisfaction and happiness. Organizations excel in providing quality services which lead to greater customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth, ultimately leading to improved financial performance [3]. Furthermore, the role of perceived service value in the service quality and customer satisfaction relationship cannot be overstated. Cronin and Taylor [3] introduced the concept of perceived service value, emphasizing that customers assess not only the quality of services but also the value they receive in relation to the cost. When customers perceive high value in a service, their satisfaction tends to increase, reinforcing the importance of balancing quality with perceived value.

Oliver's [4] disconfirmation of expectations theory highlighted that customer satisfaction depends on the gap between expected and perceived service quality. Organizations that consistently meet or exceed expectations tend to build customer satisfaction and loyalty. Service quality remains a critical concept in literature, with research confirming its positive impact on customer satisfaction through SERVQUAL dimensions. Additionally, perceived service value and expectation management are essential for enhancing service quality. In the evolving EV market, India presents significant growth potential. Overcoming current challenges could position the country as a global leader in electric mobility by 2030 [10]. Customer satisfaction in the EV sector is influenced by performance, functionality, and post-purchase support [11].

- **H1:** Service quality and customer satisfaction influences consumers to purchase EV two-wheeler.

2.3 SERVICE QUALITY, CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY

Delivering high quality service is a critical factor in achieving customer satisfaction, as it fosters positive perceptions, encourages repeat business, and generates word of mouth publicity. Research has consistently demonstrated a strong connection between service quality and customer satisfaction [3], with recent studies highlighting its significant impact on customer loyalty. Over time, the SERVQUAL framework has adapted to include modern advancements, such as AI-powered chatbots and omni-channel service quality [12] [13], reflecting its evolution in addressing contemporary customer service challenges. Customer loyalty, a desirable outcome of service quality and satisfaction, extends beyond repeat business to brand advocacy and emotional attachment [14]. Recent research explores emotional satisfaction using sentiment analysis [15] and the influence of user-generated content on loyalty and purchase decisions [16]. In the digital era, mobile loyalty programs enhance retention [17], while ethical considerations, such as corporate social responsibility, increasingly shape loyalty decisions [18].

In conclusion, service quality, measured through dimensions like tangibles, reliability, and responsiveness, directly impacts customer satisfaction. Satisfied customers exhibit loyalty behaviors, benefiting organizations through sustained revenue and reputation.

- **H2:** Service quality and customer loyalty influences consumers to purchase EV two-wheelers.
- **H3:** Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty influence the growth of EV sector.

Considering the insights gleaned from the existing literature, the proposed relationships among service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty, as illustrated in Fig.1.

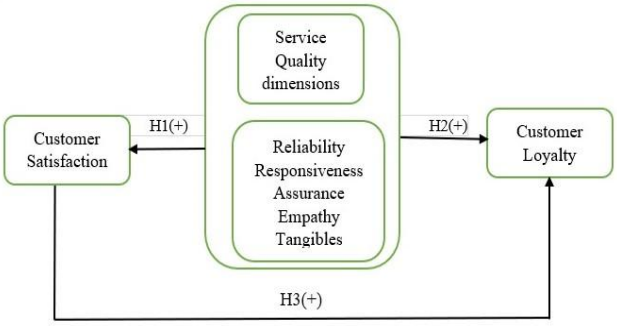

Fig.1. The conceptual framework (Source: Ernest Emeka Izogo and Ike-Elechi Ogba, 2013)

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 SAMPLING

300 sample responses were collected from individuals residing in Warangal urban district of Telangana State, all of whom were users of E-two wheelers. Respondents were selected based on convenience and purposive sampling methods. Convenience sampling was utilized for its efficiency in quickly gathering many responses [19]. However, since convenience sampling may not always produce a representative sample, limiting the generalizability of results [19], a purposive element was incorporated to mitigate potential biases.

3.2 INSTRUMENTATION AND MEASUREMENT APPROACHES

Primary research method was employed to collect the responses from the respondents. The questionnaire was developed based on a review of 30 service quality studies conducted by [20]. It comprised 32 scale items aimed to assess traits of service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. Of these, 22 variables measured service quality using the factor analysis, while 5 items each were allocated to assess customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. All measurement scales were adapted and altered from established scales to align with the specific service and cultural context of the study.

The questionnaire employed a 7-point Likert scale, where '7' represented 'very strongly agree' and '1' indicated 'very strongly disagree.' This scale was chosen due to its effectiveness in self-administered surveys [19] and its ability to provide respondents with a broader range of response options. Additionally, existing literature supports the assumption that an increased number of scale points enhances scale reliability [21].

To refine the questionnaire and identify key components accurately representing the intended constructs, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted using principal component analysis (PCA). Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α), ensuring the reliability of the extracted factors. The items corresponding to each factor were averaged to create composite constructs for further analysis. Chi-square (χ^2) test of association was employed to assess the association between service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess and measure the quality of service experienced by E-two-wheeler users in the Warangal urban district.
- To analyze the association between service quality and customer satisfaction in the two-wheeler electric vehicle industry.
- To explore the link between service quality and customer loyalty in the two-wheeler EV sector.
- To investigate the association between customer satisfaction and loyalty in the two-wheeler EV sector.
- To offer study-based recommendations for enhancing service quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty in the two-wheeler electric vehicle industry.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis explored the relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty within the EV two-wheeler industry in Telangana, India. It employed established models such as SERVQUAL and Oliver's disconfirmation theory to assess service quality and its impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty. By examining these dynamics, the study aimed to offer insights critical for enhancing customer-centric strategies and guiding policymakers and businesses in the electric vehicle sector. Through a comprehensive literature review and robust research methodology, the analysis sought to provide actionable recommendations to drive improvements in the sector's performance and customer experiences.

Table.1. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.743	23

(Source: Compile from SPSS 22 version with primary data)

The reliability statistics in Table 1 show Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.743, calculated based on 23 items. Cronbach's alpha measures internal consistency reliability, indicating how well the items within a scale correlate with each other. A value of 0.743 suggests that the items demonstrate reasonably good internal consistency, reliably capturing the intended underlying concept. Typically, a Cronbach's alpha value above 0.7 is deemed acceptable for research purposes, signifying that the scale items are reliable for further analysis.

- **H1:** Service quality and customer satisfaction influences consumers to purchase EV two-wheeler.

The Table.2 presented the Pearson Chi-Square value of 538.887, with 520 degrees of freedom. The corresponding p-value was 0.04. Since the p-value was less than 0.05, there was insufficient evidence to accept the null hypothesis, indicating that the relationship between the variables was statistically significant.

Table.2. Service quality and customer satisfaction

	Value	df	p-value
Pearson Chi-square	538.887	520	0.04
Association	0.159	1	0.02
No of Valid Cases	300		

(Source: Compile from SPSS 22 version with primary data)

Therefore, based on the Pearson Chi-Square test, a statistically significant relationship was found between service quality and customer satisfaction in the two-wheeler EV sector. It was concluded that service quality plays a crucial role in influencing customer satisfaction within the EV sector.

- **H2:** Service quality and customer loyalty influences consumers to purchase EV two-wheelers.

Table.3. Service quality and customer loyalty

	Value	df	p-value
Pearson Chi-square	538.887	520	0.02
No of Valid Cases	300		

(Source: Compile from SPSS 22 version with primary data)

The Table.3 indicated a chi-square value of 538.887 with 520 degrees of freedom, resulting in a p-value of 0.002. This was below the significance level of 0.05, providing sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis in favor of the alternative hypothesis. Consequently, it was determined that there was a statistically significant relationship between service quality and customer loyalty in the two-wheeler EV sector. The findings suggested that service quality influenced customer loyalty within this sector."

- **H3:** Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty influence the growth of EV sector.

Table 4. Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty

	Value	df	Asymp.Sig (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-square	1218.250[a]	221	.000
Likelihood Ratio	535.695	221	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	236.976	1	.000
No of Valid Cases	300		

(Source: Compile from SPSS 22 version with primary data)

The Table.4 of the Pearson Chi-Square test showed a chi-square value of 1218.250 with 221 degrees of freedom, resulting in a p-value of 0.000. This extremely low p-value is well below the standard significance level of 0.05, providing strong evidence against the null hypothesis. Consequently, it was determined that in the two-wheeler EV industry, there is a statistically significant correlation between customer happiness and customer loyalty. This indicates that satisfied customers are more likely to become repeat customers, brand advocates, and maintain long-term relationships with the business.

5.1 FACTOR ANALYSIS OF ALL DIMENSIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of Sampling Adequacy was used to evaluate the data's suitability for factor analysis. The KMO value in this analysis was 0.925, indicating very good sampling adequacy. KMO values are considered very good when they exceed 0.8 and acceptable when above 0.6. Therefore, with a KMO score of 0.925, the data was deemed highly suitable for factor analysis.

Table.5. KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO Value	0.925
Bartlett's value	4647.32
df	171
Sig.	.000

(Source: Compile from SPSS 22 version with primary data)

The outcomes of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were displayed in Table 5. With 171 degrees of freedom and a significance threshold of 0.000 ($p < 0.001$), the test produced an approximate chi-square value of 4647.321. This suggests that the variables are correlated and appropriate for factor analysis because the correlation matrix and the identity matrix differ significantly. The KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy (0.925) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity both verify excellent sampling adequacy and significant correlations between the variables, indicating that the data is suitable for factor analysis.

Table.6. Factor Analysis

Variable	Extraction
Gender	.598
Income	.738
Occupation	.776
Modernity of physical facilities	.834
Appearance of physical facilities	.850
Rate appearance and neatness of employee	.853
Visually appealing physical facilities	.912
Consistency of service	.755
Accuracy of service	.734
Service is dependable and reliable	.584
Getting service at given time	.762
Consistently deliver the service at the promised time	.829
Employees are receiving queries	.772
Employees provide prompt service when you visit	.830
Employees always willing to answer your questions	.854
Employees knowledgeable about electric two-wheelers	.781
Employees possess the necessary skills to provide the service effectively	.869
Employees are courteous and polite	.586
Employees are trustworthy	.524
Employees show genuine concern for your needs and concerns	.427
Positive approach of employee	.526
Excitement of employee while listening to customer issues	.521
Employee is a clock watcher	.426
Overall satisfaction with your electric two-wheeler	.773
Satisfaction with the performance and reliability of your electric two-wheeler	.891
Satisfaction with the after-sales service and support	.802
Satisfaction with the design and features of your electric two-wheeler	.819
Likelihood to recommend your electric two-wheeler to others	.944
Purchase your next electric two-wheeler from our brand	.834

Continue using our brand for servicing and maintenance of your electric two-wheeler	.499
Recommend our brand of electric two-wheelers to others	.871
loyalty rewards and benefits offered by our brand for electric two-wheeler customers	.421
participate in brand-related events or communities for electric two-wheeler enthusiasts (e.g., rallies, online forums, social media groups).	.505

(Source: SPSS 22 version**)**

Variables such as "Likelihood to recommend your electric two-wheeler to others" (.944), "Satisfaction with the performance and reliability of your electric two-wheeler" (.891), "Recommend our brand of electric two-wheelers to others" (.871), and "Employees always willing to answer your questions" (.854) exhibited high factor loadings, indicating strong associations with the underlying principal component(s). On the other hand, variables like "Employees show genuine concern for your needs and concerns" (.427), "Loyalty rewards and benefits offered by our brand for electric two-wheeler customers" (.421), and "Employee is a clock watcher" (.426) had lower factor loadings, suggesting weaker associations with the underlying principal component(s).

The factors "Likelihood to recommend electric two-wheeler to others," "Satisfaction with the performance and reliability of electric two-wheeler," "Recommend brand of electric two-wheelers to others," and "Satisfaction with after-sales service and support" exhibited high factor loadings, indicating they strongly influenced customer satisfaction and loyalty. Factors related to employee behavior, such as "Employees always willing to answer your questions," "Employees knowledgeable about electric two-wheelers," and "Employees provide prompt service when you visit," also demonstrated high factor loadings. This highlighted the significant contribution of positive employee interactions to customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Physical facilities and the appearance of the service center, such as "Modernity of physical facilities," "Appearance of physical facilities," and "Visually appealing physical facilities," also showed strong associations. This suggested that the ambiance and aesthetics of the service center played a substantial role in shaping customer perceptions.

In summary, the key drivers of customer satisfaction and loyalty in the electric two-wheeler sector were identified, emphasizing the importance of employee engagement, service reliability, and positive customer experiences in fostering brand loyalty and advocacy. Several factors that significantly influenced customer satisfaction and loyalty in the two-wheeler EV sector included the likelihood to recommend the electric two-wheeler to others, satisfaction with performance and reliability, satisfaction with after-sales service and support, employee engagement, service reliability, and the appearance and modernity of physical facilities. These findings underscored the importance of positive customer experiences, employee interactions, and service reliability in fostering satisfaction and loyalty.

5.2 SERVICE QUALITY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Customer satisfaction and service quality were revealed to be significantly positively correlated by the study ($p < 0.05$). There are several important factors that influence this relationship:

- Employee Engagement: Well-trained, knowledgeable, and courteous employees enhance the overall customer experience. Customers value quick responses to their queries, personalized assistance, and proactive problem-solving.
- After-Sales Service: Efficient after-sales support, including servicing, maintenance, and warranty claims and delivering promising product features plays a crucial role in maintaining high levels of satisfaction. Customers expect reliable support post-purchase, ensuring their EV two-wheelers remain in good condition.
- Physical Facilities: The aesthetics, cleanliness, and modernity of service centers significantly impact customer perceptions. Well-maintained facilities create a sense of trust and professionalism, reinforcing positive experiences.
- A comparison with international studies indicates that these factors are universally valued, regardless of regional differences. Consistency in service delivery and proactive customer support are critical drivers of satisfaction across different markets.

5.3 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY

A significantly significant association ($p < 0.01$) suggests that loyalty behaviors are directly influenced by customer satisfaction. This implies that happy customers are more likely to:

- Make Repeat Purchases: Happy consumers are more likely to stick with the same brand when making purchases in the future.
- Encourage Positive Word-of-Mouth: Satisfied customers are more inclined to serve as unofficial brand ambassadors by recommending the company to others.
- Develop Emotional Loyalty: Customers tend to feel emotionally connected to brands that align with their values and provide consistent, reliable service. This emotional attachment makes them less likely to switch brands, even if competitors offer similar products.

5.4 GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES AND LOCAL IMPLICATIONS

The study highlights a key distinction between global EV markets and the Indian market:

1) Global Market Focus: International EV markets prioritize technological innovation and environmental benefits. Countries like China and Europe emphasize cutting-edge battery technology, advanced features, and eco-friendliness.
2) Indian Market Priorities: Indian consumers prioritize affordability and practicality over high-end technological advancements. Factors like pricing, service reliability, and maintenance costs weigh heavily in purchase decisions.
    a) Bridging the Gap: For businesses in India's EV sector to succeed, localized strategies are essential. This includes:

b) Enhanced After-Sales Support: Providing robust maintenance and warranty services tailored to local needs.
c) Improved Service Reliability: Ensuring consistent availability of spare parts and trained technicians.
d) Targeted Awareness Campaigns: Educating consumers on the benefits of EVs, particularly in terms of long-term savings and environmental impact.

5.5 KEY DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

5.5.1 Drivers (Factors that Improve Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty)

- Employee Knowledge and Service Quality: Customers highly value informed and helpful staff.
- Modern, Well-Maintained Physical Facilities: A clean and professional environment enhances trust in the brand.
- Dependable Product Performance: Reliable vehicles with good battery life and minimal breakdowns encourage repeat purchases.

5.5.2 Barriers (Challenges that Reduce Satisfaction and Loyalty):

- Range Anxiety: Consumers worry about the limited battery range and availability of charging stations, which affects their confidence in EVs.
- Limited Charging Infrastructure: Inconsistent charging networks make it difficult for users to rely on EVs for long-distance travel.
- Inconsistent Spare Parts Availability: Delays in obtaining replacement parts led to dissatisfaction and negatively impact brand perception.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined the critical factors influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty in the electric two-wheeler sector in Telangana, India. By employing established models such as SERVQUAL and Oliver's disconfirmation theory, the research identified key determinants, including service reliability, employee engagement, and the physical appearance of service facilities. The findings confirm that service quality plays a pivotal role in shaping customer satisfaction, which in turn fosters customer loyalty. The strong correlation between these variables highlights the necessity for businesses to prioritize consistent and high-quality service delivery to enhance customer retention and advocacy. Further, the results align with global best practices while underscoring the unique preferences of Indian consumers, who prioritize affordability, service dependability, and post-purchase support. Despite the sector's growth, challenges such as range anxiety, inadequate charging infrastructure, and limited spare parts availability remain barriers to customer satisfaction and loyalty. Addressing these challenges through targeted policy interventions, improved service frameworks, and customer-centric initiatives will be crucial for sustaining the sector's growth. Future research can expand on this study by incorporating longitudinal data, exploring behavioral factors influencing EV adoption, and assessing the impact of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and predictive maintenance on service quality. As India progresses towards greater EV adoption, fostering a robust and customer-oriented service ecosystem will be instrumental in ensuring long-term industry success.

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