

# HALAL FOOD PRODUCER AS AN ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT JOB FOR HALAL SCIENCE GRADUATES IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

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## ABSTRACT

Employment has always been a source of worry among university graduates. The unemployment rate is possibly the most well-known labour market indicator and certainly one of the most regularly mentioned by the media in many countries, as it is thought to best reflect the lack of employment at the national level. In nations that collect data on the labour force, it gives the broadest measure of the labour market situation, along with the employment to population. A quantitative survey was conducted to scrutinize how halal science graduates could get themselves employed in the halal food sector. The survey questionnaires were designed and targeted at those who venture into the halal food business. The study resulted that the halal food producer may gain the lowest and highest monthly income of less than five hundred and more than five thousand respectively. Thus, with the good marketability of halal food and resources, there is a vast opportunity for these halal graduates to venture into businesses selling halal food as they can implement all knowledge; they gained in their halal science studies at the University.

**Keywords:** *Employment Opportunities, Graduates, Halal Food Producer, Halal Science*

## 1. Introduction

Amongst the most pressing matters in Brunei Darussalam at present is securing stable jobs for university graduates who have completed the courses they have undertaken. The matter is related to Brunei Darussalam National Strategy called Wawasan Brunei 2035, which calls for the country to act and plan – to be renowned globally for the accomplishments of its well-educated and highly competent citizens. The Brunei government has made various attempts to attain Wawasan 2035, including offering free education to its citizens (Wawasan Brunei 2035, 2019).

International Monetary Fund (IMF) 2019 country report stated that Brunei has the highest youth unemployment rate among ASEAN nations, and the survey conducted by the Labor Force Department, they have identified the unemployment rate has increased tremendously from 6.9 percent to 9.3 percent in 2014 to 2017 respectively (Ministry of Finance and Economy, 2019).

Teichler (1996) emphasized that there are three main problems of ‘over education and the mismatch between demand and supply; the wide range of higher education and employment opportunities, the increase in graduate unemployment, and risky employment. These problems are related to the current situation of employment in this country. A study on unemployment issues among registered job seekers for both graduates and non-graduates conducted by Cheong and Lawrey (2009) revealed that there is a major mismatch between skills and desire for employment, as well as severe incompatibility of job expectations and actual responsibility in the job market. Moreover, the private sector is having difficulty in attracting the local skilled workforce as the job market has always been dominated by the government sector.

Referring to the issues stated above, this paper explores the employment opportunity in the halal sector and its necessary traits. Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali has established the Halalan Thayyiban Research Centre in 2018 in response to the Titah of His Majesty during the convocation ceremony of UNISSA in 2016. This Centre offered several courses for undergraduate and postgraduate students. One of the postgraduate courses available is halal science in which the students are expected to understand that halal discipline comprises a lot of aspects in Muslim's daily basis, this includes halal food, halal education, halal tourism, halal finance, halal logistics, halal cosmetics, halal pharmaceuticals, and many more that associated with the application of science and technology in this contemporary era. Nevertheless, this paper will be focusing on how halal food producers can be a bright employment opportunity for the graduates in providing themselves with job security. Halal food has dominated the halal market as food is a necessity for everyone to stay alive and needs to be consumed every day and then (Zainal and Abdullah, 2018).

## 1. Literature Review

### 1.1. Definition of Halal

Halal is rooted in an Arabic word, it defines as permissible or legal according to Shariah Law, while the opposite of halal is haram, which means prohibited or forbidden. In addition to halal, *thayyib* is defined as clean, wholesome, and beneficial. Islam has taught all Muslims that all types of food and drinks are halal except those considered prohibited. Muslims must consume halalan thayyiban food as commanded by Allah SWT through a few Quranic verses and hadith such as:

a) Al-Baqarah, verse 68 which translates:

“O Mankind! Eat of what is lawful and clean on the earth and do not follow the footsteps of Shaitan, indeed to you he is a clear enemy.”

b) Al-Maidah, verse 88 which translates:

“And eat of what Allah has provided for you (which is) lawful and good. And fear Allah, in whom you are believers.”

c) It is reported by Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, and Ibn Majah that the Prophet Muhammad SAW said:

“What is Halal is clear. And what Haram is also clear. And in between those two is a dubious area which many people do not know about. So, whoever distanced himself from it, has acquitted himself (from blame). And those who fall into it, he has fallen into a state of Haram”.

### 1.2. Halal Food

Halal food and drink comprised all substances used are halal, halal on how to process the food, halal on how to get it and this include non-halal drinks as well (Deuraseh, 2019). Thus, halal food is classified into a few aspects:

a) Halal food substances. Allah SWT is indeed the Most Gracious, He has provided us with countless types of food that are halal to be consumed. Yet, He only prohibits very few types of food that cannot be eaten by Muslims. The wisdom behind the prohibition is no other than for the benefit and good welfare of humanity itself. Allah SWT has firmly

forbidden carcasses, blood, and swine. This includes all animals that did not die or were slaughtered by the Shariah Law.

- b) Halal on how to process the food. There is always a possibility that the food will not be processed in a Halal way which will make the food becomes unclean and unlawful for consumption. Islam has set a few conditions for halal animal slaughtering that need to be fulfilled; must be done by a Muslim slaughterer who owns a halal slaughtering certificate, must use a sharp knife to slit the throat of animals preferably with a single swipe, and make sure to protect the welfare of the animals. These animals might indirectly and unintentionally able to cause contamination by materials that are not halal throughout the process.
- c) Halal on how to get the food. A good Muslim will always strive his best to only consume *halalan thayyiban* food and drink that is spiritually healthy and hygienic. If the food is consumed unlawfully, the food will become the flesh and blood that will flow throughout the body which will negatively affect the spirituality of the consumer
- d) Prohibition of Non-Halal drinks. All types of intoxicating drinks are prohibited. This includes drinks that are tainted with intoxicants or non-halal ingredients even with very little amount. In this contemporary era, these drinks have been distributed in the form of alcoholic drinks.

It is also noted *halal* products must be free from prohibited elements as mentioned in the Quran (Raffi, 2019). Additionally, according to Brunei Standard for **Halal Food PBD 24:2007**, halal food means food fit for human consumption and permitted by *hukum syara'* and fulfils the following conditions (Deuraseh, 2019):

- a) The food or its ingredients that do not contain any parts or products or animals that are non-halal to Muslims according to *hukum syara'* or products of animals which are not slaughtered according to *hukum syara'*.
- b) The food does not contain any ingredients that are *najis(impurities)* according to *hukum syara'*.
- c) The food that is safe and not harmful.
- d) The food that is not prepared, processed, or manufactured using equipment that is contaminated with things that are *najis(impurities)* according to *hukum syara'*.
- e) The food or ingredients do not contain any human parts or its derivatives that are not permitted by *hukum syara'*.
- f) During its preparation, processing, packaging, storage, or transportation, the food is physically separated from any other food that does not meet the requirements stated in terms of (a), (b), (c), (d), or (e) or any other things that have been decreed as *najis(impurities)* by *hukum syara'*.

### 1.3. Halal Food Producer

Halal food producer is people who make and supply Halal food for consumption. They are responsible for protecting the permissibility and hygienic aspect of food from raw materials to the point of consumers' consumption. (W. Sari, 2014, Roziah Atan 2018) has listed several producers' behaviours by following Islamic values which need to be implemented:

- a) Long-term insight, oriented towards the afterlife goal.

- b) Keeping promises and contracts, both in the internal or external scope.
- c) Meet the measurements, accuracy, accuracy, and truth;
- d) Sticking to discipline and dynamic.
- e) Glorify achievement/productivity.
- f) Encouraging *ukhuwah* between economic actors.
- g) Respecting individual property rights.
- h) Following legal contract/transaction requirements.
- i) Fair in transactions.
- j) Having social insight.
- k) Payment of wages on time and reasonable.
- l) Avoiding types and production processes are forbidden in Islam.

#### 1.4. Good Manufacturing Practice

Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) are the fundamental operational and environmental conditions required to ensure safety throughout the production processes (Raffi, 2019). The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the United States of America has introduced and enforced manufacturing guidelines that should be applied and performed by food producers that can affect both the safety and quality of food products. GMPs cover extensive guidelines ranging from employees, equipment, process, and condition of its surrounding in the production process. Below are several criteria that GMPs have addressed:

- a) Environmental control: location, design, the structure of the building, its interior, equipment, and water supply of the premises.
- b) Personnel practices: All personnel involved throughout the production processes need to implement good hygiene, as it will give an effect on food safety and quality. Any person who entered the place where food is being prepared needs to ensure that they do not contaminate the food product. They also need to comply with the standards of procedure of food production; hand washing, proper clothing, using footwear, and headwear.
- c) Shipping, receiving, handling, and storage: inspection procedures for transport vehicles, loading, unloading, and storage practices, inspection procedures for incoming products, shipping conditions, returned and defective products, allergen control, chemical storage, and waste management.
- d) Pest control: always monitor both exterior and interior aspects of the building and apply pesticides.
- e) Sanitation: methods of sanitizing and cleaning as well as pre-operational evaluation.
- f) Equipment maintenance: guidelines for preventive maintenance as well as calibration of all equipment and instruments that can affect food safety. This includes but is not limited to thermometers, thermocouples, metal detectors, scales, and pH meters.

- g) Recall and traceability: methods used to ensure final products are correctly coded and labelled. All of the incoming and outgoing materials are traceable; the recall system must be set up properly and tested for its effectiveness.
- h) Water safety: guidelines to inspect include water, ice, and steam as well as water treatment standards to ensure it is safe for food processing.

GMPs comprised of two main components that are important in achieving a good food safety system:

- a) Written programs are all mandatory policies, guidelines, and procedures that need to be ensured to meet the standards listed in each GMP program. These includes:
  - i. Policies and procedures: standard operating procedures (SOPs) and sanitation standard operating procedures (SSOPs)
  - ii. Monitoring procedures.
  - iii. Recordkeeping: methods to keep and handle the records.
- b) Implementation comprises conducting GMPs related activities and monitoring can be done accordingly.

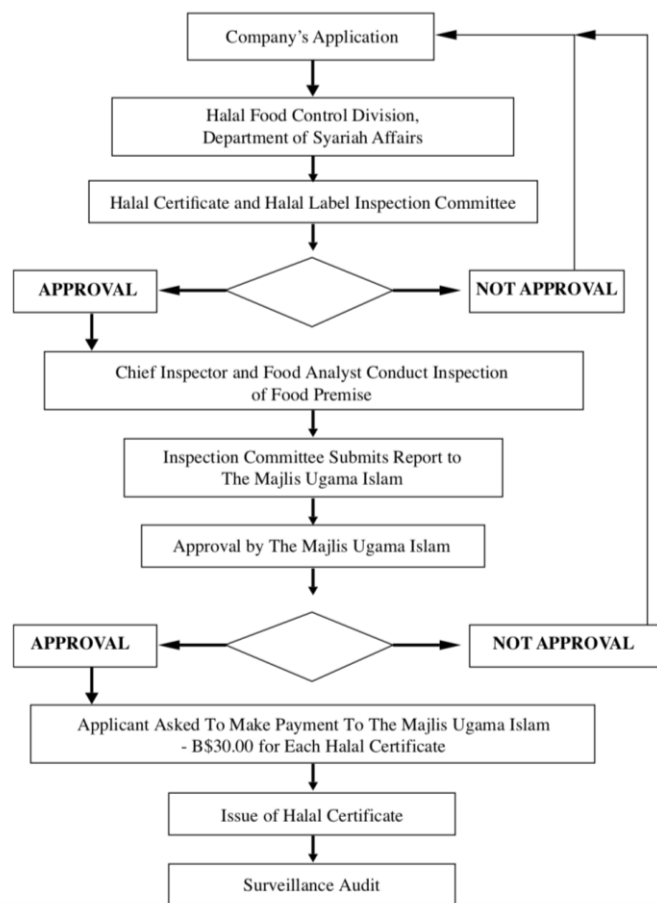
There shall be sufficient and appropriate education, training, and skill regarding the plant operations that can be provided to everyone who is working in the unit. The organization must highlight the critical points where food safety can be compromised. Several factors will affect the types and level of training (Manning & Baines, 2004):

- a) The source of the food, specifically its ability to resist the growth of pathogenic or spoilage microorganisms.
- b) The technique of handling, packing and reducing the possibility of contamination of the food.
- c) Extensive food preparation before its final consumption.
- d) The storage conditions of the food.
- e) The shelf life of the food must be informed before consumption.

### *1.5. Brunei Halal Certification*

Halal food producer is obliged to have a halal permit and halal logo for their business as per required by Halal Certificate and Halal Label Order 2005. This Order is known as the legal framework for Halal Certification in Brunei. Halal certificate and halal permit are compulsory for business premises such as restaurants or eateries and food products respectively. It is mandatory for food business owners in Brunei Darussalam to apply them. A halal certificate is compulsory for any businesses that involve food preparation that including restaurants, cafes, food courts, and central kitchens. Whereas halal permit is specifically used for food processing facilities such as factories.

About the provision in the Order, there should be at least two halal supervisors on the business premises who are responsible to monitor halal-related matters concerning food and company. Brunei Halal logo has the most crucial element that the main authority controls the ratification of this logo. Brunei halal certification and halal logo are known to have a stringent process of acquiring and this is the reason why Brunei halal logo is very well trusted by other international certifying bodies.

**Figure 1: Flowchart for Application of Halal Certificate**

Source: Halal Food Control Division, Ministry of Religious Affairs

### 1.6. Marketability of Halal Food

Muslims has made up a 1.9 billion worldwide population whereby most of them live-in South-East Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa. Their population will always be increasing and it is expected to conquer up to two-fifth of the world population. ASEAN countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore are considered big players in halal markets which are all located close to Brunei Darussalam. According to Thomson Reuter and Dinar Standard (2015), in 2014 it is estimated that global Muslim spending on food and drinks (F &B) increased 4.3% to reach \$1.128 billion. This condition makes the potential of the halal food market reaches 16.7% of global spending in 2014 (Standard, 2015). Nonetheless, Hasan and Awang (2009) stated that Muslim minority countries such as Australia, Canada, France, and New Zealand have been trying to produce halal food as they realized that there is a good opportunity to tap into the Halal market. They are also well aware of the significance of halal business, as the halal niche market will essentially contribute to their country's revenue (Deuraseh & Heradhyaksa, 2020).

Brunei Darussalam is an Islamic country in which 83 per cent of its population are Muslims. Hence, the halal industry is among the key players in diversifying the economy of this country. The halal food sector has been dominating the halal business which is commonly under the observation of Darussalam Enterprise (DARE). There are four types of businesses in Brunei; micro, small, medium, and enterprises (MSMEs). In response to this, DARE aims to assist local businesses and entrepreneurs to achieve dynamic and resilient company growth. With this, developmental programs for MSMEs which is known as

Industry Business Academy (IBA) have been introduced by DARE to escalate the growth of the local businesses (DARE, 2018).

In an article published by bizbrunei.com in 2016, Brunei's Halal industry generates \$88 million in revenue and employed 835 people according to data reported by 35 companies. The main contributor is the halal-certified food products, especially the products under the Brunei Halal brand that is run by the state-owned Ghanim International Corporation which has made an entry to the United Kingdom market as per shared by the Minister of Energy and Industry. He urged local micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to collaborate with other companies whether to manufacture, brand, market, or distribute their products in the domestic, regional, and even going for the global market. The Minister highlighted that the halal industry is expanding that he also touched upon the extensive and comprehensive principle of Halalan Thayyiban. This covers high values of Islamic law as well as adhering to *maqasid syariah* which aims to ensure that the "entire value chain" can provide the "highest standard". The government has reduced the time in obtaining halal certification of food products from more than six months to 45 calendar days to ease the food producers and at the same time keep the efficiency and transparency of the process.

Brunei Halal Foods brand is one of the distinctive government projects that is managed by a company named Ghanim International Corporation Sdn Bhd. The main objective of this brand is to be a platform for the development of local products and MSMEs. This project offers local MSMEs a good opportunity to manufacture their halal products and assists them to commercialise their products in the global market through Ghanim International Corporation Sdn Bhd. Most importantly, their objectives include; fulfilling the obligation of *fardhu kifayah* (a legal obligation that must be discharged by the Muslim community as a whole) in Islam which is the Muslims' duty to facilitate the supply of halal products to Muslims around the world (Haji Mustafa, 2009). Due to the high integrity of 'Brunei Halal Foods' brand in terms of repacking products, marketing, and distribution, it enables them to market the halal products efficiently and effectively to regional markets and Gulf Coast countries, as well as Europe and the United States (Fleishman- Hillard Majlis, 2011). Moreover, this brand is very confident in assuring the consumers that products manufactured under its brand have gone through the best security, and standards check and have been tested to meet and exceed the expectations of halal consumers as their main goal is to provide high-quality products to the global halal market.

Global collaboration between Brunei Meat Company (BMC) and four Japanese Companies aims of bringing in Brunei-Made Halal products into the Japanese market by next year (Kon, 2019). The collaboration took years of discussion, product-testing between the companies involved and the endless efforts of the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) which has accomplished its main goal of bringing interested parties together. Okuochi Hiroshi is an advisor who has said to the President for Brunei Affairs of ERIA; "Brunei Halal is a premium certification for Halal in the world, based on a report on the Study on Halal Industry Investment in Brunei Darussalam carried out by ERIA in 2016". Soon after the Halal Seminar report is released, the four Japanese companies namely Chibo, Ginrei Service Co Ltd, Kanda Farm Co, and Harry's were very interested in the Brunei Halal Certification and visited Brunei to look for collaboration potential. The Chibo company has come up with a Brunei-made and Halal certified okonomiyaki from Brunei Meat Company and there will be more products to be introduced together with the other three companies. Okuochi even mentioned that the products will be exported to Indonesia and Malaysia and they will be supplied to the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games and

Paralympic Games. This is just an indication of how strong the brand of Brunei Halal is in the eyes of other countries.

In this regard, with great support from the government, there is no doubt that halal food products have high potential both in the local and global markets. Hence, the next part of this paper will try to look at how the current local halal food businesses have been doing so far and whether being a halal food producer can be a stable career for the halal graduates.

## 2. Materials and methods

To gather the necessary data, the instrument used to collect data in this research is a questionnaire. According to Chua (2006), a questionnaire is a set of written questions in the respondents are required to answer based on the options or alternatives given. 10 questionnaires were distributed to a large number of people with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and interpretations of Halal implementation, government rules and regulations, and consumer acceptance of Brunei gaining accreditation widely and globally, allowing and leading to better data collection from various perspectives. The method used for data collection of this research is a quantitative analysis. There are 14 questions altogether in this survey by which all of which are specifically designed and targeted at those who already own the halal food business. Survey questionnaires were made using Google Forms and distributed through online platforms via WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook Messenger.

## 3. Results and Discussion

A survey was done and collected from 30 respondents who had answered the questionnaires and all respondents are operators of online/home-based food businesses. For this study, the identity of the respondents is kept confidential to respect and protect their privacy.

The survey result shows there are 10 respondents (33.3%) who make and sell food as their full-time job while the rest 20 respondents (66.7%) are only selling food as their part-time job. Predominantly in Brunei Darussalam, there are a lot of people who have a permanent job yet still find other side income. This might be due to their great passion for cooking and baking, or it might be due to an insufficient amount of salary to cover their current living expenses. Nonetheless, both modes of business have shown the respondents' effort in getting profit that is halal and full of *barakah* (blessings).

The survey question was also focusing on the period these food businesses have been established, and the result from the survey shows that more than half of the respondents have been in this industry for more than 5 years and the rest of them are those who just entered the market in less than 3 years. It has proven that the food business has a very high potential to be sustainable in the halal food industry.

The result shows half of the respondents (15) are University graduates. Meanwhile, the rest of the respondents are postgraduate, diploma, and Brunei Cambridge GCE 'O' Level which takes up 26.7%, 20%, and 3.3% respectively. Education develops critical thinking. This is vital in teaching a person how to use logic when making decisions and interacting with people. With education, people tend to have better health and wellbeing, higher social trust, greater political interest, lower political cynicism, and less hostility towards immigrants. These traits are what made good-characters citizens who will be able to comply with any regulation given by the government. These people also tend to have a strong personality and are very optimistic that they will be able to overcome any struggles in life.



In terms of categories and types of food, the information and data show the result by which more than half of the respondents are selling sweet treats such as cakes, cookies, tarts, and other types of desserts. Meanwhile, 36.7% of the respondents are selling savouries and including rice, meats, and pasta. The rest of the respondents are selling snacks-type foods. Bruneians are known to favour sweet-tasting food and this shows there is a high market for sweet treats than any other type of food.

The data reveals there are only 2 of the respondents (6.6%) have applied for the Brunei halal certificate. Halal certification is crucial in halal food, based on this data there are still a lot of these food sellers who have not yet applied for the halal certification which may be due to the thought of they are only doing it part-time. Presumably, a few things may hinder these food sellers from applying for halal certification such as; the stringent process, high cost of application, and the requirement of getting separate places to make the foods that are to be sold to others.

Aside from collecting information for job employment, the purpose of this question is to know what triggers these respondents to start making and selling foods in the first place. 21 respondents (73.3%) started their businesses as a passion to be involved in the halal food industry and the rest of them are either started doing food business because the respondents were eager to try out new things and while waiting to get a stable-permanent job. Having passion is essential in building a business because it is an inner strength that will push them to be successful. With passion, it inspires the vision for the business even if it is in a niche that no one has done before, it helps people to set a solid foundation for their business and establish core values, and it helps people to create authentic content that resonates with right customers as well setting them apart from other competitors. However, it can be seen that some of the respondents are selling foods out of curiosity in trying new things and to get income while waiting for a permanent job, this shows how the people are more open-minded and do not solely rely on the government to provide jobs for them.

The finding shows that, in profit-making, 17 respondents (56.7%) earn less than \$500, while 8 respondents (26.7%) earn between \$500 to \$1000, and 5 respondents (16.7%) \$1500. This profit is calculated by their monthly earnings through business.

On the other hand, these food sellers have acquired the highest amount of monthly income; 7 respondents (23.3%) of them have gained more than \$5000 for their monthly income, 1 respondent has acquired its highest income of more than \$3500, 10 respondents (33.3%) earned more than \$2500, and 12 respondents (40%) earned their highest income of more than \$1500. Based on this number, it can be observed that more than half of those who have the lowest income is less than \$500 are only doing it part-time, while almost all of the respondents who earn their lowest-income of less than \$1500 are doing it full time. Furthermore, some of these food sellers even gained more than \$5000 per month; this amount is believed to be so much higher than the average salary of fresh graduates.

The educational background of the respondents shows that they have no prior business knowledge, however, for the benefit of their business, several marketing steps and strategies have been taken to advertise their business. Marketing plays a vital role in introducing food products to potential customers. The results above have shown that all of the respondents have been using advanced technology and social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp to market their products. This just shows how technology has been dominating the world and using them to expand one's business.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study discusses the prospect of halal food producers as alternative employment for halal science graduates. People do not have an open knowledge about halal, thus the demand for 'halal' employment is not as much. The reality is that there are no private companies that demand employees with halal science backgrounds now. Based on the analysis of the data collected through 30 respondents, currently, only the government is offering employment but with a limited number of hiring. Hundreds of students graduating in the halal study, and being halal food producers are indeed having the highest potential to get themselves employed immediately. With strong knowledge about halal, these graduates are obliged to implement everything they learned throughout the Halal courses in producing halal food in pursuance of meeting the Halal standards.

Anyone who wants to start selling foods, they may seek help from DARE as their purpose is to help the new entrepreneurs grow efficiently by providing systematic approaches and developmental courses. Initiating collaboration with other companies such as Ghanim International Corporation for the production and marketing of halal food products will be a good step in exposing their products to potential customers. In addition, those who are willing to invest more in their halal food business may enter the halal global market as the halal industry is vastly growing worldwide. Apart from that, the respondents have given several recommendations for those who want to enter the halal food industry as they have more experience. In business, it is vital to set the intention right to succeed with a good purpose. They mentioned that perseverance, *tawakkal* and always being kind to the customers no matter how difficult the situation can be, are among the things that must be implemented. Finally, they even emphasized that being a Halal food producer might not be as easy as it seems to be, but they need to set their goals straight and be persistent in this field.

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