

Mythical Discourses as an Incentive for Action in Advertisements: A Semiotic*

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ABSTRACT

Advertising, which has been conveyed by different means of communication from the past to the present, is an important sales and marketing method. To influence people and their purchasing decisions, advertisements employ various methods, including semiotics. The basic field of semiotics is to examine, analyze, and interpret images, behaviors, and signs within the context of the relationship between the signifier and the signified. Advertisements communicate with consumers using the verbal and visual codes they contain. Mythical expressions are frequently encountered in the verbal and visual codes used in some advertisements. This study analyzes the advertisement of the Kereviş company with the theme 'Today Days Teremyağ' using the semiotic method, interpreting the findings. It is determined that the Teremyağ advertisement uses mythical discourses as an element of thought transfer and action that directs certain behaviors in its content, visuals, and discourse language. The Teremyağ advertisement appeals to people through the myths of success, effort, overcoming difficulties, and ultimately reaching a reward, similar to storytelling in epics, legends, and religious stories.

Keywords: Semiotic Analysis, Mythical Discourses, Advertising Analysis

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Introduction

Looking at the general definition of advertising, its function is to persuade consumers to buy products by directing their behavior in the market and using various mass media. The main purpose of advertising in today's consumer society is to provide value to consumers and persuade them about their needs (Williams, 1993, p.53). Advertising campaigns not only persuade, but also produce meanings such as personal needs, wants, aspirations and values that the products will express to consumers (Williamson, 2001, p.11-12). In this process, all signs have meanings for people and are reproduced each time. Advertisements are expected to direct consumers in the desired direction by using effective appeal (Ross, 1990).

Advertising campaigns, which continue to proliferate in our time, not only persuade, but also produce other meanings, including the characteristics of products, but also the personal needs, wants, aspirations and values that these products will express to consumers. For example, a battery needs to be presented in a way that expresses how many days it will run a flashlight. Thus, the advertising text is not a single language in the predetermined sense, but a production process that translates the language of objects into the language of people and vice versa. In this process, all signs have meanings for people and are reproduced every time, because this is the result of production (Williamson, 2001, p.11-12). As a result of production, it is seen that advertisements, which effectively use visual, auditory and emotional elements, successfully present the goods and ideas they are trying to sell to people.

It is a fact that the advertising sector tries to increase consumption by creating mental associations on people with signs, symbols, behaviors and discourses in product or service advertisements with coded indicators. Advertisements are expected to persuade consumers to direct them to purchase behavior and to influence them and direct them in the desired direction by using effective appeal (Ross, 1990). In addition to calls for persuasion and influence in the content of advertisements, there are some strategies used to persuade consumers such as references, support from experts, utilizing famous people, using examples from life, and using music (İplikçi, 2015, p.69-75).

Advertisement

Advertising is an effective communication tool that penetrates and shapes our daily lives (Becan, 2012, p.38). At the same time, advertising is an activity or service aimed at providing the desired attitudes and behaviors of various goods and services to predetermined target audiences through newspapers, magazines, radio, television, posters, product signs and other mass media for a certain fee. Reaching people through different communication channels from past to present, advertisements are used as an important sales and marketing tool.

Looking at the history of advertising, the criers and screamers who roam the streets shouting announcements, news or goods for sale are good examples of the history of advertising from the past to the present. The first known example of printed advertising in history is the hanging of a brochure of a book prepared for priests on the walls of churches with the invention of the printing press in 1450, long before the Industrial Revolution.

In the following period, in the 17th century, which is considered as the birth year of advertising, advertising in newspapers and printed publications reached a high level. During this period, products such as tea, coffee and chocolate were promoted (Erdem, 2013, p.16). The speed increase and diversity in production brought by the Industrial Revolution led manufacturers to work to differentiate their products from other organizations and to increase their awareness. As a result of these efforts, the symbols (emblems) and brand studies used from the past to the present have gained another dimension.

These emblems and brands have added meaning and value to the product and have created an effective method of differentiating products from each other. In the 19th century, advertising was limited to newspapers and magazine advertising started in the last quarter of this century. From the past to the

present, radio, television and digital advertisements have been added to this diversity with technological developments and have taken their place in our lives.

Myth and Advertising

Myths are narratives that play an important role in transmitting social memory and cultural values. These stories, expressed through symbols and metaphors, shape the collective unconscious and identity of a society (Barthes, 1972). By addressing universal themes of human experience, myths have a profound impact on the way individuals and communities perceive and make sense of the world (Campbell, 1949).

Although myths originated in ancient times, they continue to exist in modern societies. Today, myths are reproduced and disseminated through media, literature and popular culture (Eliade, 1963). In this process, myths function as an important reference point in individuals' search for identity and meaning.

Advertising is a creative process designed to attract the attention of consumers and encourage them to purchase a particular product or service. In this process, advertisers use various strategies to mobilize consumers' emotional and cognitive responses (Williamson, 1978). Myths are an important part of these strategies. Myths are used to make the messages of advertisements more effective and memorable.

The use of myths in advertising is a powerful tool to emphasize the meaning and value of the product or service in the consumer's life. For example, the "freedom" myth used in an automobile advertisement can convey the message to consumers that this automobile will free them from the constraints of daily life and allow them to move freely (McQuarrie and Phillips, 2005). Similarly, the "beauty" myth used in a cosmetic product advertisement promises users of the product to achieve an idealized standard of beauty (Vacker & Key, 1993).

The use of myths in advertising appeals to consumers' subconscious and triggers their emotional response. This emotional response makes consumers remember the advertisement and develop a positive attitude towards the product (Leiss, Kline, & Jhally, 1990). Thus, myths shape consumer behavior by increasing the impact of advertisements.

Literature Review

The intersection of myths and advertisements has attracted the attention of many researchers and has been addressed in various studies. Barthes (1972) examined how myths are reproduced and consumed in modern culture, explaining in detail how myths are used in advertising and how even everyday objects acquire mythological meanings. Barthes' work provides an important basis for understanding the ideological structures of advertisements.

Campbell (1949), in his study on the universal structure and archetypes of myths, provides a basic reference point for understanding the myths used in advertising. Campbell's analysis of myth archetypes helps us to understand the origins of the hero and journey themes frequently found in advertising texts.

Eliade (1963), discussing the role of myths in modern society, emphasizes the importance of myths in human history and the individual unconscious. Discussing how myths are reproduced in the modern world through media and advertisements, Eliade explains the continuity and evolution of myths in advertising.

Williamson (1978), who focuses on analyzing the ideological meanings of advertisements, analyzes the symbolic meanings of advertisements and the effects of these meanings on consumers with a semiotic approach. Williamson states that myths make advertising messages more effective and appeal to consumers' subconscious.

Leiss, Kline and Jhally (1990) investigate the role of advertisements in social communication and their effects on consumers and examine in detail the effect of myths used in advertising on consumer

behavior. This study is an important source for understanding how advertisements shape social norms and the role of myths in this process.

McQuarrie and Phillips (2005), who examine the indirect effects of metaphors and myths in advertising on consumers, investigate how the visual and linguistic elements of advertisements acquire meaning. McQuarrie and Phillips explain how metaphors and myths create powerful associations in the minds of consumers and thus influence consumer behavior.

Finally, Vacker and Key (1993) analyze how female body images are idealized in advertising and how these images are based on mythological foundations. Vacker and Key's study reveals how the beauty myth is used in advertising texts and how this myth shapes consumer perceptions.

This literature review provides a basic framework for understanding how myths are used in advertising and their impact on consumers. Myths are powerful tools that guide consumer behavior by making advertising messages more effective and meaningful.

In contemporary studies, further insights into the role of myths in advertising can be found in *The Routledge Companion to Semiotics* (Cobley & Andriessen, 2021). This comprehensive volume explores how semiotic theories apply to modern advertising, offering a detailed analysis of how mythological narratives are employed to influence consumer behavior. Additionally, *Chandler's Semiotics: A New Introduction* (2022) provides a modern perspective on semiotic principles and their relevance to advertising. Chandler's work sheds light on how mythic elements are strategically used in advertisements to create compelling messages that resonate with audiences on a deeper, often unconscious level.

These contemporary sources build upon Barthes' foundational ideas, expanding our understanding of how myths function within the advertising industry to shape and reinforce ideological messages.

In addition to the history of advertising, there is a large literature on the psychological and sociological effects of advertising. Williamson (2001, p.11-12) states that advertisements not only introduce products to consumers, but also produce deeper meanings such as personal needs, wants and aspirations. Ross (1990, p.25) emphasizes the strategies of advertisements to persuade and manipulate consumers. Furthermore, Eliade (2001, p.33) examined the role of mythic narratives in advertising.

Semiotic analysis is an important method for understanding and interpreting advertisements, explains how advertisements produce meaning and convey messages to consumers by analyzing the relationship between signifier and signified, which are the basic concepts of semiotics (Barthes 1979, p. 89).

With its history and development, advertising has become not only a commercial tool but also a cultural and social phenomenon. Advertising channels, which have diversified with technological developments, play an important role in the promotion of products and services. Semiotic analysis methods help us understand the deep meanings of advertisements and their effects on consumers.

Therefore, this study focuses on the following research question:

A.Q. How are mythical discourses used in advertisements?

A.Q.2. What effect can the use of mythical discourses and signs in advertisements have on mobilizing consumers?

Research Objective

Advertisements aim to reach their target audiences by using consumption-oriented messages and various attitudes, discourses and beliefs that exist in society. The most effective way to achieve this goal is to communicate with consumers by using powerful codes accepted by society. The aim of the research is to reveal how the verbal and visual codes used in the advertising medium are used in the advertising

visuals and discourse language of today's world as elements that direct certain behaviors and encourage action through mythical discourses, thoughts, images, behaviors and signs.

Research Method

Case study, one of the qualitative research designs, constitutes the methodology of this study. Case studies, as one of the qualitative research designs, describe a situation; It is defined as the systematic examination of an event, a group or a community (Heale and Twycross, 2018, p.7).

Population and Sample of the Study

Within the scope of the study, 10 commercials with a large number of viewings, in which hidden mythical discourses and visual codes were used, were identified and one of these commercials was selected and analyzed according to the simple random sampling method. In the selection process, the number 8 commercial was determined. The list of commercials is given in Table 1. Therefore, the research part includes the analysis of Kerevitaş company's advertisement with the theme 'Today is Teremyağ'.

Table 1. Advertisement List

	Advertising
1.	Turkish Airlines Victory of Çanağkale Special Movie "This Time, We Flew for Victory"
2.	Coca Cola Ramadan - I asked the Yellow Flower
3.	When Turkish Airlines Dreamed
4.	Red Bull Red Bull Wings
5.	Pastavilla What a Happiness to Know How to Share!
6.	Kütahya Porselen 40th Anniversary Commercial
7.	Nike Find Your Greatness
8.	Kerevitaş Ülker Today is Teremyağ!
9.	Kent Olips Commercial
10.	Turkcell 300 Spartan Commercial Movie

Source: www.youtube.com

Data Collection and Analysis Technique of the Research

Document analysis technique was used to collect data in the study. Document review is the process of collecting and analyzing data from existing written sources. This research method involves a systematic review of various written and digital sources. Using the case study method, examples of the use of advertising and myths in a specific context were analyzed in detail (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p. 189-193). During the analysis process, the data were categorized thematically, focusing on how myths are used in advertising and how they shape consumer behavior.

The data obtained within the scope of this study were analyzed according to the field of semiotics. Semiotics, semiotics or semiology is a science based on the systematic examination of the interpretation, production and processes of the meanings of signs. Interpreting their meanings by examining images, behaviors and signs in the context of the signifier-signified relationship is the main subject of the field of semiotics. Semiotics is a form of interpretation used to understand the meanings expressed by every sign in the world of signs and the truth behind what we see (Agocuk, 2013, p.31). Through signs, people are able to communicate and send meaning through myths. Myth is an extremely complex cultural reality that can be addressed and interpreted from multiple complementary perspectives (Eliade, 2001, p.15). Semiotics argues that all worldly signs are loaded with meaning. Thanks to this discipline, the ability to communicate through pictures, symbols and various stimuli is recognized as a language skill (Sığırcı, 2016, p.29). Language is a system of signs that can be understood and represented. As such, it can be compared to various sign systems, such as words, the deaf and dumb alphabet, symbolic sacred

ceremonies, manners that are considered a sign of grace, and military emblems (Saussure, 1998, p.46). Regardless of the source, this only applies to messages designed by society (Sığircı, 2016, p.29).

Each sequence in television commercials contains a sign. The sequences in the advertisement, which is the subject of this research, were analyzed using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis method and aimed to understand the signs that will reveal the meanings with Barthes' (2014, 1979) mythical analysis method.

Findings and Interpretation

Under this heading, analyzes were carried out according to the semiotics technique through the sequences in the commercial movie. In each sequence, certain images were obtained and analyzes of those images were given.

The ad starts in a home kitchen. The first frames show an oven with glass doors and white kitchen cabinets. A woman is seen walking determinedly in green pants and ballet flats. This scene takes place in the kitchen as part of everyday life and evokes a familiar feeling in the viewer (Williamson, 2001, p.12).



Figure 1. Woman Walking in the Kitchen

Indicator

- Kitchen
- Oven with glass door
- White kitchen cabinets
- Green pants and ballet flats

Shown:

- Kitchen: The home environment as part of everyday life, a safe and familiar space (Williamson, 2001, p. 12).

- Oven with glass doors and white kitchen cabinets: Modernity, cleanliness and order.

- Green pants and ballet flats: Comfort and a slice of everyday life.

By showing viewers a familiar and safe home environment, this scene appeals to the ad's target audience of housewives. The image of a modern and clean kitchen emphasizes the quality of the product and its suitability for a modern lifestyle. The green trousers and ballet flats create a character that the viewer can identify with.



Figure 2. Woman Showing Teremyağ

The woman ties her blue kitchen apron and shows Teremyağ in her hand. In the kitchen, there are details such as a porcelain teapot and a salad board. The external voice motivates the woman by saying "today is your day!". In this scene, it is seen that the advertisement conveys a personal message to the consumer and deals with the themes of individual success and self-confidence (Ross, 1990).

Indicator:

- Woman
- Blue kitchen apron
- Teremyağ

Shown:

- Woman: The main actor of the home, the female figure traditionally identified with the kitchen (Ross, 1990, p.25).
- Blue kitchen apron: Symbol of working in the kitchen, meticulousness and preparation.
- Teremyağ: The product is the focal point of the advertisement.

The woman showing Teremyağ in the kitchen shows the viewers how the product is used in daily kitchen activities and how natural this use is. The blue kitchen apron symbolizes that the woman is ready to work in the kitchen and emphasizes that Teremyağ is an integral part of this process.

Throughout history, the perception and presentation of space, which is one of the dominant elements of space, has been very different. Approaches in which lyrical narration is put on stage are a method frequently used by commercial producers in terms of expressing emotions (Saldıray, 2017, p.3-6). The woman in the kitchen is motivated by the external voice with expressions such as "fires will burn, water will be drawn". These expressions are supported by the visuals in the advertisement. For example, scenes such as the burning of the stove and the melting of butter are visualized mythical narratives. These scenes evoke the feeling of being part of a ritual (Barthes, 1979, p.89).



Figure 3. Preparation in the Kitchen

Indicator:

- The hearth
- The woman who melts butter
- Rice pilaf

Shown:

- The hearth: The area where food is prepared, a warm and central part of the house (Barthes, 1979, p.89).
- Woman melting butter: Creativity and labor are part of food preparation.
- Rice pilaf: Traditional food, healthy and delicious meals prepared at home.

Scenes such as the fire burning, butter melting and smoke billowing support the mythic narratives in the advertisement. These scenes are used as incentives for the consumer to take action. For example, the burning fire and melting butter create a sense of energy and transformation in the viewer (Eliade, 2001, p.33).



Figure 4. Fire, Butter and Smoke

Indicator:

- Burning fire
- Melting butter
- Smoke

Shown:

- Burning fire: Energy, transformation and passion (Eliade, 2001, p. 33).
- Melting butter: Flavor, consistency and part of the preparation process.
- Smoke: Temperature, cooking and preparation.

This scene shows the audience the importance and contribution of Teremyağ in the cooking process. The burning fire symbolizes energy and transformation, while the melting butter represents flavor and consistency. Smoke, on the other hand, is an indicator of warmth and preparation, giving the viewer the impression that it is a natural part of the cooking process. The active role of women in the kitchen shows the use and practicality of Teremyağ. Kitchen utensils stand out as indispensable parts of the food preparation process. The prepared dishes emphasize how the product improves taste and quality.

The actions of the woman and the narration of the voiceover depict preparations for special occasions. This enables the advertisement to establish an emotional connection with the consumer by referring to the rituals of daily life (Rifat, 1992).

In the later part of the ad, a cheerful ambient music plays. This music is used to create a positive home environment. According to research, cheerful music triggers positive emotions and has positive effects on heart health (Sezer, 2011, p.1473).

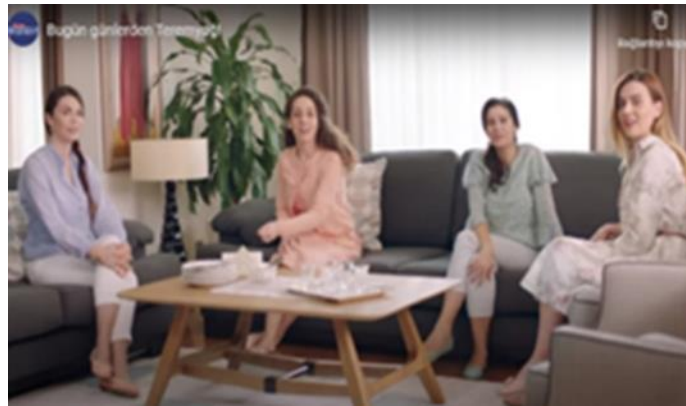


Figure 5. Joyful Music and Home Environment

Indicator:

- Joyful music
- Women socializing at home
- Prepared food

Shown:

- Joyful music: Positive emotions, happiness and relaxation (Sezer, 2011, p. 1477).
- Women socializing at home: Social bonds, sharing and friendship.
- Prepared food: Flavor, treats and care.

This scene shows the audience how the product promotes social bonds and happiness. The cheerful music triggers positive emotions, while the socializing women emphasize the importance of sharing and friendship. The prepared food shows that Teremyağ is part of these moments and plays a role in providing delicious treats. Many studies have shown that positive, optimistic music is good for the body and that there is a link between music and heart health (Sezer, 2011, p.1477). Considering the negative effects of solid fats on heart health, it is seen that the music used is not only used to create a cheerful

home environment, but also to create the perception of a heart-friendly margarine.

Women have been coming together for many years to get out of routine life and spend their free time away from home or work, to relax, have fun, socialize with each other and learn about what is happening in their immediate surroundings (Büyükokutan, 2012, p.4). When the cultural codes contained in the advertisement are examined, 'sittings', which is a kind of social gathering, whether it is an active working businesswoman or a housewife dealing with the work of her home, women have come together to socialize at home with changes in form, structure, content and the updates that have emerged accordingly (Büyükokutan, 2012, p.4). In this scene, the external voice says "Today is Neslihan", indicating that the woman is serving pastry to her guests. Social interaction and sharing between women creates a positive effect on the target audience of the advertisement (Büyükokutan, 2012).



Figure 6. Women's Conversation and Food

Indicator

- Women
- Foods
- Chat

Shown:

- Women: Social interaction and solidarity (Büyükokutan, 2012, p. 4).
- Food: Sharing and offering.
- Conversation: Bonding and communication.

The women's conversation and the sharing of food show the audience that Teremyağ is a part of social interactions and treats. Food stands out as a symbol of sharing and treats. This scene emphasizes that women, the target audience of the ad, strengthen social bonds and the role of delicious food in this process. The fact that women enjoy eating the food accompanied by cheerful conversations reflects a sense of admiration and success. These scenes support the positive emotions that the advertisement wants to create in the audience (Williamson, 2001). The women's appreciation and satisfaction while tasting the food reinforces Teremyağ's perception of taste and quality. This scene tells the audience that the product is of high quality and delicious, which is why it is liked and preferred.



Figure 7. Tasting the Food

Indicator:

- Women's facial expressions
- Foods

Showing:

- Women's facial expressions: Like and satisfaction (Navarro, 2008, p. 1).
- Food: Flavor and quality.

The gestures of the guests while tasting the food express that they liked the food that Ms. Neslihan made with Teremyağ. This scene reinforces the perception of quality and taste of the product (Navarro, 2008).

In the last frame of the ad, the external voice uses the slogan "Teremyağ, the flavor twin of butter that brings us together on Neslihan's day". The ad ends with Ms. Neslihan's satisfaction and happy look. This scene aims to leave a lasting impression on the audience by conveying the message of the advertisement in a powerful way (Ross, 1990).

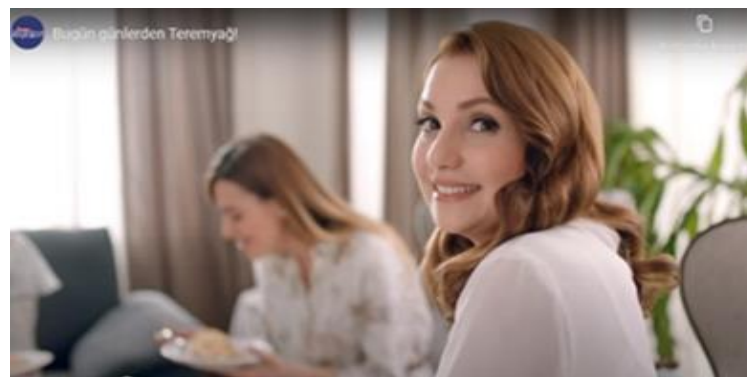


Image 8. Last Frame of the Advertisement

Indicator:

- Happy woman
- Teremyağ
- Slogan

Shown:

- The happy woman: Success and fulfillment (Ross, 1990, p. 30).
- Teremyağ: Product, flavor and quality.
- Slogan: Message and value of the product.

The last frame of the ad emphasizes to the viewers that Teremyağ brings success and satisfaction. The happy woman symbolizes the success and satisfaction achieved through the use of the product. The slogan summarizes the message and value of the product and aims to leave a lasting impression in the viewer's mind.

Conclusion

It has been determined that in the scenes and discourse language in the advertisement, thoughts that guide certain behaviors are conveyed. In particular, motivation, happiness and pleasure were used to appeal to the existing behavioral patterns of women.

When analyzed according to the 'binary opposition' system approach, it was observed that women who use the product will be happy with the appreciation of the food they make on special occasions and will gain superiority over their competitors. On the other hand, women who do not use the product in their meals may feel sad and defeated. This helps to emphasize the perception of "the woman who makes the most delicious food".

The Teremyağ advertisement, which is based on mythical sayings used in storytelling, epics, myths and religious stories, markets success, effort, overcoming difficulties, overcoming difficulties and finally achieving reward and happiness with mythical words and various visual instruments (Kanmaz, 2009, p. 121). In this way, the margarine advertised by the producer has ceased to be just a fat brand and has assumed other meanings. Rather than being a tool used in cooking, it has become the key to success and an indicator of the happiness and pleasure brought by victory. The flavor Teremyağ adds to meals is a metonym for success on special occasions.

The main purpose of advertising is to encourage the consumer to take action and to ensure that the advertised product is preferred by the consumer. While the slogan "Today is Your Day" aims to attract consumers to the market shelves, the slogan "Teremyağ, the flavor twin of butter" tries to convince consumers by claiming that its product is equivalent to natural butter.

In Teremyağ advertisement, it is fictionalized that women can make the most beautiful dishes only with Teremyağ and as a result, they can reach the pleasure of success and happiness. This advertisement has successfully used mythical discourses and behaviors by the manufacturer to attract the attention of today's women and to encourage the consumer to take action.

In this study, Teremyağ's advertisement titled 'Today is one of the days of Teremyağ' was analyzed through semiotic and discourse analysis. The scenes and discourse language in the advertisement convey the thoughts that guide certain behaviors. Motivation, happiness and pleasure are used to appeal to the existing behaviors of women. Teremyağ advertisement markets success and happiness with mythical words and visuals. In this way, the product has ceased to be just an oil brand and gained other meanings.

By using mythical discourses in its advertisement, Teremyağ creates elements that encourage consumers to take action and promotes its product in this way (Kanmaz, 2009).

Ethics Committee Approval: This study was carried out through the examination of existing literature and research, and does not include any experimental application or data collection process that would require an ethics committee. For this reason, ethics committee approval has not been obtained.

Informed Consent: An informed consent was not obtained for this study

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

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