

## Multimodal Creativity in (Anti)Tourism Texts

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This paper argues and seeks to demonstrate that the tourist-travel dichotomy traces a debatable and contestable discursive space, often articulated via anti-tourism stances. This notion is epitomized in innovative and creative multimodal domain-specific texts, whose generic configurations transcend traditional boundaries and question stable and rigid conceptual and generic distinctions. Such instances consistently occupy an increasingly hybrid, blurred and opaque contact zone, which needs to be explored with a relevant and appropriate methodology. Acknowledging the crucial role of multimodality in processes of genre change and innovation, the feasibility of multimodal analysis for tourism-travel text examination is here claimed. Hence, the meaning-making contact and interaction of different modes and modal resources will be inspected in three creative instances: a static poster, a dynamic digital travel diary and a website. All texts have been chosen as they provide evidence of multimodally projected creative (anti)tourism discourse. The following questions will be raised. Which modes and modal resources are deployed in the multimodal ensembles? How do they interact? Which meanings do they express? Albeit differently in terms of syntagmatic and paradigmatic configurations, the three texts multimodally project an (anti)tourism discourse with ultimate tourist purposes, inviting viewers to visit the destination or to book the accommodation option.

*Keywords:* multimodality, meaning-making, creativity, (anti)tourism texts

### Introduction

This paper argues that the dichotomic tourist-traveller opposition traces a debatable and contestable discursive space, often articulated via anti-tourism stances. This notion is foregrounded in innovative and creative multimodal domain-specific texts, such as travel apps, travel blogs or humorous advertisements, whose generic configurations transcend traditional boundaries and question stable and rigid conceptual and generic distinctions. As a result, they occupy an increasingly hybrid position, between tourism and travel domains, and between travel literature and tourist discourses. Such a blurred and opaque contact zone needs to be explored with a relevant and appropriate methodology.

Acknowledging the crucial role of multimodality in processes of generic change and innovation,

the feasibility of multimodal analysis for the examination tourism-travel texts is here claimed. Hence, the meaning-making contact and interaction of different semiotic systems will be inspected in three creative instances: a static poster, a dynamic digital travel diary, and a website. Which semiotic systems are deployed in the multimodal ensemble? How do they interact? Which meanings do they express? How do they express (anti)tourism stances? How is promotion achieved? Albeit differently in terms of syntagmatic and paradigmatic configurations, the three texts multi-modally project an (anti)tourism discourse<sup>1</sup> with ultimate tourist purposes, inviting

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<sup>1</sup> As for graphics, the word 'anti-tourism', with a hyphen, is adopted to indicate the socially widespread attitude, whereas '(anti)tourism' (between parentheses) is used

viewers to visit the destination or to book accommodation.

The first section discusses anti-tourism positions in literature, in social situations and in tourism discourses. This is followed by an illustration of the adopted methodology, i.e. multimodal analysis. The third section presents a text analysis for static, dynamic and digital texts and is followed by the conclusion.

### **The Anti-Tourism Positions Embedded into Tourism Discourse**

The anti-tourism discourse configures an explicit denigration of tourism and tourists (Francesconi, 2014). Dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the first authoritative traces are clearly visible in the literary works of George Gordon Byron and William Wordsworth, who lamented the enlargement of the practice of travel. Subsequently, authors such as Frances Trollope, Charles Dickens, Henry James and E.M. Forster have perpetrated this condemnation. Best known as Virginia Woolf's father, the man of letters and mountaineer Leslie Stephen thus wrote on the pages of *Cornhill Magazine*:

The tourist, in short, is notoriously a person who follows blindly a certain hackneyed round; who never stops long enough before a picture or a view to admire it or to fix it in his memory; and who seizes every opportunity of transplanting little bits of London to the districts which he visits. [...] We are supposed to travel mainly in search of the beautiful and the picturesque; and yet the faculty which takes pleasure in such things is frequently in a state of almost complete atrophy. (p. 174)

This passage depicts the tourist as a passive, superficial, unrefined being, incapable and unwilling to appreciate the value of what s/he is visiting. Unfolding a dichotomic discourse, tourism condemnation is tightly linked with travel celebration (Buzard, 1993; Fussel, 1987). Accordingly, travel would be a responsible, sustainable, fulfilling activity practised by independent, curious and refined human beings moved by an authentic interest in what is remote,

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when it is embedded into tourism discourses and texts with ultimate tourist aims.

ancient and authentic. In a novel that inspired Bernardo Bertolucci's movie *The Sheltering Sky* (1990), Paul Bowles overtly outlines the opposition:

Whereas the tourist generally hurries back home at the end of a few weeks or months, the traveler belonging no more to one place than to the next, moves slowly over periods of years, from one part of the earth to another. Indeed, he would have found it difficult to tell, among the many places he had lived, precisely where it was he had felt most at home. (1949, p. 6)

This American writer foregrounds the different relation the tourist and the traveller would maintain with home, the former having a nostalgic bond that forces him/her to hurry back home as soon as possible, the second boasting a cosmopolitan nature and attitude.

Far from being confined to literature, anti-tourism pervades everyday formal and informal interactions. Curiously, such positions are frequently used in tourism discourse and among tourists themselves (Culler, 1989; Francesconi, 2014). As MacCannell (1976) and Culler (1989) claim, all tourists denigrate and ridicule other tourists, positioning themselves as distinct and different, namely as travellers. They systematically long for the best-kept secret destination, look for non-tourist accommodation options, eat traditional and local cuisine; to summarise, paraphrasing Culler, an off-the-beaten-track travel is definitely the most beaten track (169).

Clearly, the anti-tourism standpoint projects more an ideological assumption than an ethical position. The semantic border between a tourist and a traveller is indeed more opaque than it appears and the attempt to find a clear distinction, by considering the sender profile, holiday type, communication function, proves to be problematic. The anti-tourism discourse thus traces a semiotic circuit that configures and perpetuates stereotyped visions of self and other (Francesconi, 2014).

Like tourists and tourist practices, tourism textuality cannot be snobbishly condemned as 'superficial' (Culler, 1989) but deserves critical attention and scientific investigation. In fact, tourist textual practices and genres show global and social reach and impact (Thurlow and Jaworski, 2010, p. 235). They boast, accordingly, an extreme potential to influence pro-

spective tourists with regard to destination-image formation and destination-choice performance. Simultaneously, they unveil and reveal pervasive and rooted socio-cultural dynamics.

In his socio-semiotic approach to tourism and tourism texts, Culler (1989, p. 159) addresses tourism texts as ‘marking’ a tourist attraction, acting as signs to the signified: ‘by giving information about it, representing it, making it recognizable’. In the form of guides, plaques, leaflets, ‘the marker represents a sight to the tourist’ (ibid.), expressing the semiotic structure of tourist attractions. Consequently, tourism is to be seen as a ‘semiotically embedded service’ (Thurlow and Jaworski, 2010, p. 7) and tourism texts as sign systems representing and making sense of the world. The text configuration process indeed informs and is informed by the socio-cultural context in which instances are produced and consumed and of which they provide valid insights.

Contemporary tourism communication mainly relies on the digital medium, by which interaction has become global instant, and democratic. Over the last decade, the development of Web 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0 applications has progressively enabled a generalized shift from a vertical, monological delivery of information to horizontal and participatory forms (from business to consumer, B2C, through consumer to consumer, C2C, to human to human, H2H). Nevertheless, traditional textual forms, based on a monologic delivery of information, tend to coexist alongside more open ones.

Further to this, tourism and travel texts are becoming increasingly multimodal, variously combining semiotic resources, resulting from either natural or induced phenomena (Calvi, 2010). In the first case of natural phenomena, it reflects the aforementioned technological changes or other economic, aesthetic, psychological trends. In the second case of induced phenomena, it is exploited by tourism marketing experts for its semiotic, cognitive and emotional potential: it captures the readers’ attention and engenders a positive mood and a pleasant psychological attitude; it assists concentration, performs emphasis and thus leaves a lasting mnemonic trace (Francesconi, 2014).

Valid for all promotional domains, these multifaceted processes remain central in destination promotion. This is due to the intangibility of the travel and holiday experience as object of promotion, by

which the holiday cannot be directly seen, touched and inspected before the actual experience (Cho & Fesenmaier, 2011). In an attempt to overcome this ontological limit, promotional tourism texts constantly attempt to *re-present* the place, that is, to shape and offer a new, consumable textual presence (Francesconi, 2001a, 2011b). Multimodal instances create in their users an illusion of holiday experience and consumption before leaving home, by intertwining medium and mode-derived affordances such as a) static and dynamic b) verbal, visual and audio effects, c) hyper-textual navigation.

In this paper, I argue and aim to demonstrate that the tourist-travel opposition as a debatable and contestable discursive space is foregrounded in innovative and creative multimodal domain-specific texts. These consistently occupy an increasingly hybrid position, in-between tourism and travel domains, conceptual and generic stances. The blurred and opaque contact zone needs to be properly explored with a relevant and appropriate methodology.

### **Methodology Issues: From SFL to the Multimodal Framework**

As multimodality is here addressed as a relevant meaning-making strategy in tourism discourse, the tools of multimodal analysis are adopted for the investigation of authentic domain-specific instances. Multimodal analysis originated in M.A.K. Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics, or SFL, (1978), viewing language as doing things and as making meaning in a given context. Questioning logocentrism and the predominance of writing in our system of thought and communication, multimodality does not deny but redefines writing, seen as one semiotic resource among others and as making meaning in combination with other modes (Kress, 2010, p. 79). All semiosis is thus addressed as multimodal, monomodality being perceived as an abstraction (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001, 2006; Kress, 2010; Lemke, 2002). If all texts are and have always been multimodal, it is contemporary communication that makes substantial and pervasive use of co-occurring semiotic systems.

Specifically, an emerging field of interest in multimodal studies is intersemiosis, which expresses an interest in forms and reasons for modal interplay. Attention is drawn to the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a product or in the per-

formance of an event and to their mutual relation: of equality, of inequality, or, again, of complementarity. Examination of multimodal semiosis should overcome an 'additive' view, interested in the juxtaposition of the different meanings expressed by the distinct modal systems. An 'integrative' perspective, in contrast, observes intersemiosis in the light of 'inter-semiotic complementarity' (Royce, 2007, p. 63), as it subtly associates and integrates modes that mutually balance weaknesses and strengths. This implies that modal relations as reciprocally enhancing the semiotic potential of each mode and invites the inspection of 'multiplied meaning' as deriving from the interaction of modal resources (Baldry and Thibault, 2006; Lemke, 1998; Stöckl, 2004, p. 9).

In this vein, multimodal artefacts can be divided between space-based and time-based texts. The former include static texts such as brochures, leaflets, maps, and realize meaning through the simultaneous co-deployment of visual and verbal items. The latter encompass dynamic texts, such as conferences, videos, and walks, and are articulated upon the unfolding in time of various integrated semiotic resources. Between these is hypertext, which combines properties of both static and dynamic texts (Francesconi, 2014). All of them project meaning along the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes and can be analysed accordingly.

Overall, meaning-making may occur both syntagmatically and paradigmatically. These linguistic concepts indicate the various juxtapositions of verbal items into larger units. Good examples of conventionalised syntagms are collocations and collocations, the first indicating lexical and the second grammar co-occurrences (Eggins, 2011; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). In contrast, paradigms operate on the selection of one among several possible realisations: SFL text analysts examine indeed meaning-making processes deriving from the choice of an item along the paradigmatic axis of the clause, its place in the clause unit or its syntagmatic combination with another item. It is noteworthy that SF grammar is not seen as a rule-based system: every grammar choice implies a selection from a set of options within a system and choices are not assessed in terms of (un)correctness but of (un)appropriateness to a particular context (Eggins, 2011, p. 20).

In multimodal environments, syntagmatic and paradigmatic meaning-making systems indicate a) the orchestration of various semiotic resources within the page (synchronic syntagmatic), and b) modal sequential interaction unfolding as choice across pages (paradigmatic). Notably, synchronic syntagmatic co-occurrences simultaneously display in space, whereas paradigmatic combinations unfold in time. In order to illustrate multimodal syntagmatic and paradigmatic configurations, I will be discussing three authentic examples: a static instance, a hypertext and a dynamic, multimodal text. All texts have been chosen as they provide evidence of multimodally projected creative (anti)tourism discourse.

### Configurations of Ego-Enhancing Anti-Tourism in a Static Text

The first example I wish to share is a poster showing the *Divina Toscana* tourism promotion campaign, realized by Rome-based firm LS&BLU and meant to be presented at the Milan Tourism trade fair (BIT), in February 2014. Inspired by Dante Alighieri's epic poem *The Divine Comedy*, the six visual-verbal texts depict Tuscan dreamy natural landscapes and art pieces with well-known quotations from the literary masterpiece, whose title it overtly mentioned. Upon its release, the president of Tuscany's own regional government, Enrico Rossi, has defined the campaign 'Toscana Taroccata', 'fake Tuscany', denouncing the digital manipulation of images. The project has been also widely criticised by photographers, by the local press, and by Tuscan people, who have interpreted it as misleading advertising. The €100,000 campaign has thus been withdrawn and the Tuscany region exhibited blank walls at the Milan BIT.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of this, the posters are of interest in terms of multimodally-projected meaning, as they deploy visual and verbal modes simultaneously co-occurring and interacting on the same page. Against the backdrop of Florence city, the first visual I wish to discuss shows a group of visitors admiring Michelangelo's *David*. The syntagmatic co-occurring verbal text writes: »Esthetes, contemplate perfection.« Both the visual and the verbal texts express the ac-

2 See images and discussion on the campaign on the Corriere Fiorentino website: <http://corrierefiorentino.corriere.it/firenze/notizie/politica/2014/9-febbraio-2014/campagna-divina-toscana-no-rossi-toscana-taroccata-2224047125741.shtml>.

tion of contemplation performed by the heterogeneous group of people, while the statue embodies ideal perfection. Specifically, the visual text frames a positive script, which is then confirmed by the verbal vector. A cohesive and coherent form of interplay can thus be envisaged, to be defined as ‘intersemiotic congruence.’ (Royce, 2007)

In the second case, the visual text features a tranquil and serene Tuscan hilly landscape at sunset, with a row of cypresses leading to a picturesque *borgo*. Quoting the *Comedy*’s most famous passage, the caption writes: »All cares abandon, ye who enter here.« The visual shapes a positive script (showing a land that is like heaven), which is then reversed by a negative script, framed by the verbal text used by Dante to warn people going to hell. Clearly, the visual and the verbal systems project contrastive meanings, featuring what Royce terms ‘inter-semiotic dissonance.’ (Royce, 2007) As the visual is more powerful than the verbal, it predominates and shapes a positive destination image; the verbal only achieves a humorous effect (Francesconi, 2011c). Apparently opposite strategies, both congruent and dissonant forms of syntagmatic inter-semiosis in the two examples are attention-grabbing and memorable.

Noteworthy for the anti-tourism discussion, the campaign is characterized by the presence of an inter-textual reference to Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. By exploiting this literary quotation, it rejects the formulaic, euphoric and laudatory tones and features of traditional tourism language. An ego-enhancing strategy can be envisaged, one that celebrates and lures the pretended cultural knowledge of its target (Dann, 1996). It makes them, accordingly, feel part of an elite of refined travellers rather than of a massified crowd of superficial tourists and invites them for an exclusive intellectual experience.

Having tackled the creative, multimodal expression of anti-tourism discourse in a static text, the following section will examine a dynamic instance.

### Dynamic Intersemiosis in a Travel Diary

My second example is a digital travel diary created by a young couple of travellers to Canada. It is a 9’14” clip, uploaded on the Youtube platform, within a vlog environment that includes videos shot in different areas of the world. The term ‘vlog’ itself is a blend word, which highlights the innovative interac-

tion between the video and the blog communication situations. The authors are two young travellers, Alex and Luke. In the video, we see their bodies and hear their voices. The text is divided into six sequences, in-between an introduction and a conclusion, entitled: ‘Architecture in Iqaluit’, ‘The infrastructure of sewage’, ‘Education’, ‘Food’, ‘Early winter sunsets’, ‘We love Nunavut’.<sup>3</sup>

As for intersemiosis, the video deploys the simultaneous unfolding of dynamic images, accompanied by a soundscape. Meaning is projected in the video along both the synchronic and diachronic syntagmatic axes: text analysis should address modal co-patternings within the shot (synchronic syntagmatic) and modal sequential interaction unfolding as choice (diachronic syntagmatic). An uncut video unit, the shot is generally taken by film text analysts as the basic meaningful video unit (Pan, Tsai, H., Lee J., 2011), its role and function corresponding to those of the clause in SFL (Halliday 1978; Halliday and Hasan 1986). It is composed by a still frame, and, in turn, composes the highest ranks of scenes and sequences. These textual units are syntagmatically organised via transitions, types of links that mark the shift from one segment to the next. Acting as linking adjuncts between paragraphs or sentences, transition types play a crucial cohesive role, since they weave the text together (Bateman & Schmidt, 2012; Burn, 2013; Francesconi, 2011b; Pan, Tsai, H., Lee J., 2011). In order to show interacting systems in the video, Table 1 provides a transcription of multimodal data depicting synchronic syntagmatic modal co-occurrences along the horizontal axis and the diachronic syntagmatic combination of items along the vertical axis in one of the diary scenes.<sup>4</sup>

Consistently, this video exploits the (anti)tourism discourse at different levels. Firstly, it adopts a Web 2.0 open, participatory environment which invites feedback and subverts traditional tourist monological discourse (Francesconi, 2015; Maci, 2013). Secondly, the video is a diary, shot by independent trav-

3 See the video by Alex and Luke on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3olPvBuFA4>.

4 Data have been obtained through the support of ELAN software, a system for multimodal video annotation developed at the Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen and freely available online at <http://tla.mpi.nl/tools/tla-tools/elan/>.

Table 1

Shot n. and length	Sound track		Trans.					
	Main Repr. Participant	Size of frame	Angle and movement	Written text	Spoken text	Music	Sound	Trans. Type
1. 6:48-6:49	Written text	X	Eye angle and stationary camera	Early winter sunset	X	Instrumental music: guitar	X	Effect trans.
2. 6:50-6:59	Alex, cell phone and city as bg.	From medium to close-up on Alex	Eye angle, Alex approaching. Hand-held camera.	X	2.21 p.m and the sun is setting in Iqualuit (voice as figure)	IM ↔ volume (music as field)	Traffic noise as ground	Effect trans.
3. 7:00-7:14	Alex and city as bg.	Close-up on Alex then she moves from the camera	Eye angle Hand-held camera. Alex moves from camera.	X	It's twilight here, dusk if you will 2:45 p.m. (voice as figure)	IM ↔ volume (music as field)	Traffic noise as ground	Effect trans.
4. 7:15-7:21	Alex, house, darkness	Close-up on Alex from behind	Eye angle Alex walking Hand-held camera.	X	L (VO): Christmas lights? What, what time is it? A. 3:00 o'clock. Ah!	IM ↔ volume (music as field)	Traffic noise	Effect trans.
5. 7:22-7:24	School bus, street, houses, Darkness	Long shot	Eye angle School bus moving Hand-held camera.	X	X	IM ↔ volume (music as ground)	Bus driving noise as figure	Effect trans.
6. 7:25-7:32	Alex and city as bg. Darkness	Close-up on Alex	Eye angle Hand-held camera.		A. We just saw the school bus go by, which is normal 'cause it's 3:00 o'clock but it doesn't feel normal.	IM ↔ volume (music as ground)	Traffic noise (noise as field)	Effect trans.

Shot n. and length	Sound track			Trans.				
	Main Repr. Participant	Size of frame	Angle and movement	Written text	Spoken text	Music	Sound	Trans. Type
7. 7:33-7:46	Alex, interior setting, with lights on	Medium shot	Eye angle Hand-held camera.		L (VO): Is it 2:59 in the morning? A: No, it's 2:59 in the afternoon. Once again, it's dark here: the sun set an hour ago. L (VO): What do you think, Bill?	IM ↔ volume (music as ground)	X	Dissolve
8. 7: 47-7:55	Dog, interior setting, with lights on	From long shot to close-up on dog	High angle. Hand-held camera. Zoom.		(VO) I don't know any difference because I am a dog.	IM ↔ volume (music as ground)	X	

ellers who have no vested interest in promoting or demoting the destination (Dann, 2012). Third, different intersemiotic strategies are congruently used to shape an informal tenor, author credibility and message authenticity. As for the visual track, these are the presence of travellers, cell-phone display to show the time and prove that darkness comes very early in the afternoon, intimacy-generating eye-angle and eye-contact. As for the soundscape (van Leeuwen, 1999), the most prominent reliability-shaping solutions are the dialogue between Alex and Luke and authentic noises, such as traffic.

After the observation of a dynamic (anti)tourist text, the following paragraph will discuss a humorous hypertextual example.

**Hypertextually Projected Humour in Entertaining (Anti)Tourism Texts**

My third example is a website presenting the Hans Brinker Budget Hotel based in the capital city of the Netherlands, Amsterdam. The webpage is part of a broader communication campaign developed through posters, videos and souvenirs, where self-humour is exploited as a strategy of self-promo-

tion. Consistently, the website celebrates the lack of services, the negligence, the fake eco-policy offered by the Hans Brinker Hotel.

A hybrid text combining the logics of space and of time, the website advocates the study of the orchestration of different modes in both spatial and temporal dimensions, first, along the syntagmatic (within the fixed webpage) and then along the paradigmatic axes (across multiple and fluid webpages) (Adami, 2013; Boardman, 2005)). Showing a low degree of granularity, or fragmentation, the Hans Brinker Budget Hotel page layout is very basic, mainly white and empty. Only some rare and sparse clusters are present, of different sizes and colours (van Leeuwen, 2011). The most salient, central one depicts a slideshow, with humorous posters inviting users to ‘Like’ the Facebook page with messages like the following: ‘Please like us if you have any complaints’. A similar process is activated at the paradigmatic level, with links offering opportunities for information expansion. A cluster encouraging ‘Ask reception’, for example, connects with a camera on the inactive and idle receptionist, sitting at her desk. Space on the

screen is offered for questions to be typed, and, as a response, she starts knitting. Other clusters, yet, provide information on facilities, services, contact details and a map.

As for anti-tourist positions, the website configures an entertaining and amusing message. Not only does humour differentiate the text from other competitive instances belonging to the same domain: it suspends the disbelief that consumers of tourist promotional material normally have in order to attract and hold viewers' attention and to activate a positive emotional response (Pearce, 2009, p. 639). A powerful strategy of self-promotion (Davies, 2002, p. 20), humorous self-mockery presents the hotel owner and staff as self-ironic and worth-knowing hosts, who will make the stay in Amsterdam unique. The website also configures a parody of traditional celebratory tourism texts and denounces their pretended credibility and reliability. Via these various communication strategies, the website inscribes its audience as different, alternative and unique in terms of age, interests and motivations. The Hans Brinker Hotel thus offers an off-the-beaten-track adventure, opposed to touristy accommodation included in mass tourism packages.

### Conclusions

Questioning and challenging simplistic and biased distinctions between travellers and tourists, and, in turn, between tourism texts and travel literature, this paper observes that, as revealed in everyday life and communication, their relation is less dichotomic and more fluid than thought. This is especially valid in creative, multimodal innovative texts, thereby proposed as worth analysing.

Nevertheless, the contemporary scenario of tourism-travel texts shows a high degree of complexity, as a wide range of economic, socio-cultural, psychological, political issues are at stake. The communication system is then multidimensional, multifunctional, multimedia and multimodal, all aspects undergoing constant and substantial dynamism.

Acknowledging the complex and fluid nature of tourism-travel discourse, the approach to authentic domain-specific instances needs to start from a consistent conceptual and methodological framework. Syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes have been identified and proposed as outlining the horizon along

which static, dynamic and hypertextual instances multimodally project meaning.

The methodological framework is to be used in order to map multimodal creative strategies adopted in tourism texts. Acknowledging the widely recognized importance of creativity in tourism as related to innovation, renewal, and regeneration (Richards, 2014), this paper advocates a more extensive and systematic exploration of tourism textuality in this vein. Specifically, it argues that (anti)tourism creativity is an insightful and stimulating line of textual investigation, which is the scope of my future research.

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