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Prosumption of Discourse of a 'Beautiful Policewoman' By Netizens in Online News Portal

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Abstract

The emergence of young and stylish policewomen called "beautiful policewomen" as newscasters in the traffic information broadcasting program and various events contribute to mass media coverage of policewomen. In February-March 2016 two online mass media in Indonesia, *Liputan6* and *Tribunnews,* intensively reported a beautiful policewoman who worked as a secretary of West Java Police chief and involved in the handling of bomb incident operation in Bandung, West Java. The news discursively figure a professional woman in the masculine work field. Most of the news about "beautiful policewomen" mainly focused on their physical attractiveness and explored private issues. Such news had gone viral due to the content distribution through Facebook and gained various comments from netizens. This research focuses on the netizens' comments on the news of "beautiful policewomen" on *Liputan6* and *Tribunnews,* which had gone viral on Facebook. It is aimed to examine the prosumption of discourse of a "beautiful policewoman" by netizens. Using Gunther Kress' multimodal critical discourse analysis, this research analyzes the forms of discourse of the related news contents and the way in which netizens discursively construct a policewoman as a subject. The research reveals that netizens tend to associate beauty with capability and physical attractiveness. On the other hand, the studied comments figure the prevalent masculine dominance in Indonesian police institution. The roles of professional women remain being overlooked not merely in the workplace such as police institution but also publicly by media as well as netizens.

Keywords: online news; prosumption ; multimodal discourse ; policewoman;

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The emergence of Indonesian policewomen began intensely in early 2010. Their appearance adorned television screen through the National Traffic Management Center (NTMC) broadcast program which was established in 2009. The police woman officer served as a presenter who conveyed traffic conditions in major cities of Indonesia

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recorded via CCTV. Their presence raised a new phenomenon. They suddenly became figures who were idolized by many people. In fact, there is a special name for them, 'beautiful policewomen' (*polisi wanita cantik* or *polwan cantik*). Polri intend to change the image of the police through the emergence of the beautiful policewomen. A study conducted by Orisa Shinta Haryani's (2016) titled *Feminist Review Policy on the Makeup Allowance for Women Police (Polwan) in Indonesia* shows that every policewoman officer receives a makeup allowance every month. The construction of beauty towards police women was also formed by the mass media, such as through NTMC National Police broadcasting programs. The show forms a new image of policewomen in accordance with the television logic. They are trained to imitate newscasters, even though they still use police attributes. The policewomen who appeared on television are young, beautiful, and use makeup.

Beautiful policewomen are often covered as upcoming celebrities. Mass media frequently talk about their personal-private lives and physical attractiveness. In addition, they are also occasionally invited to be guest stars on talk shows and variety shows programs. Over time, policewomen who were called "beauty" were not always those who were on NTMC National Police programs, but also those who appeared at public events or some incidents. Furthermore, the media exposure to beautiful policewomen towards society is getting stronger through Web 2.0 technology that allows the media contents to become more widespread. The mainly used characteristics of Web 2.0 are interaction between users, building online communities, producing comments, uploading and downloading content, and creating markets (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010: 19).

Thus, news about beautiful policewomen uploaded to Facebook account of online mass media can be shared again by Facebook users through the 'share' feature, responded by using the expression feature, or commented on through the comments column. Facebook, as one of the Web 2.0 technologies, provides greater opportunities for netizens to participate in it. Henry Jenkins (2006) through the concept of participatory culture explained that old media consumers are isolated-individuals, while new media consumers are connected to each other and are more open to expressing opinions. Audiences in the digital realm are prosumers. The production practice by audiences is part of their participation in responding to various media texts. Netizens as prosumers perform the practice of production-consumption (prosumption). They produce text in the form of comments and consume the text about beautiful policewomen news and other netizens' comments about it.

The implementation of Web 2.0 by online mass media allows audiences to give their opinions and forms channels for discursive processes (Pinto-Coelho, Carvalho, & Seixas,

2017: 4). This study identified that netizens' comments on the news content about the beautiful police woman were not only as a response, but also discursive practices. Netizens' comments are important because comments are a form of participation and practice of consumption in the digital era as well as discourse. Netizens' comments on an issue are a manifestation of how netizens are active subjects constructing what they read.

The purpose of this study was to examine how netizens discuss the news about a beautiful policewoman through their comments on news links uploaded by *Liputan6* and *Tribunnews* accounts on Facebook. The form of participation of new media audiences is also interesting material to be studied, because the new media audience is also active in producing new texts as a form of response to what they read or watch. Participatory culture in cyberspace and netizens' production-consumption practice has been widely studied with mixed findings. One object of research studied on participatory culture in cyberspace and the practice of netizens assumptions in it are netizens' comments on social media and online news sites towards the news.

Netizens' comments on the reports are known to be important material for journalists to determine their market orientation and increase online news site traffic (Hanusch & Tandoc, 2017; Hille & Bakker, 2014). Netizens' comments are considered to have a quality. High-quality comments are comments not written by an anonymous account, have clear story ideas, and have material that can be followed up by the relevant media while low-quality comments are comments that contain hate speech, slander, incitement, and racism. Based on the findings of the study, more low-quality comments were found on Facebook compared to mass media sites (Hille & Barker, 2014). Comments are also forms of cognitive schemes that are formed through people's daily experiences (Len-Rios, Bhandari, & Medvedeva, 2014). This can be demonstrated by the use of language in a comment. The comments in this study are not conducted to see how the mass media reports or give feedback to netizens who commented, or how the comments influenced the news room policy related to cover police woman. This study identifies netizens' comments as discourses and will analyze them with critical discourse analysis method that not only analyzes the text, such as the use of language, but also considers the social cognition of the subject that produces the text and the social context surrounding it.

1.2. Method

In February 2017, the appearance of a policewoman named Bripda Ismi Aisyah as one of officers during the bomb attack in Cicendo, Bandung, West Java was intensely reported

by online mass media. At that time, she was the secretary of the West Java Regional Police Chief Executive Inspector General Anton Charliyan. Some online mass media reported that the presence of a policewoman at the time of the incident was a diversion for netizens with the use of the term 'wrong focus' or 'distracted focus'. Not long after her appearance in the event, the policewoman was often invited to be a guest star on various television shows. Sometimes she became an object of seduction by hosts of the programs. This study aims to examine Facebook's netizens construction on news about a policewomen in two Indonesia online news portal: *Liputan6* and *Tribunnews*. Both online mass media have more than 8 million followers on Facebook. There are four uploads of news articles about the beautiful police woman from both online mass media accounts that have many comments to be studied.

Uploaded articles from *Liputan6* account titled *Cerita Bripda Ismi Aisyah Lawan Demo dengan Kecantikannya* (The Story of Bripda Ismi Aisyah Who Opposed a Demonstration with her Beauty) received 83 comments and *Penasaran Status Polwan Cantik di Bom Bandung? Ini Bocorannya* (Curious About the Status of the Beautiful Police Woman in Bandung Bomb Incident? This is the Leak) received 104 comments. Also, uploaded articles from *Tribunnews* titled *Fotonya Viral, Tapi Netizen Salah Fokus Lihat Perut Polwan Cantik Ismi Aisyah* (Her Photo was Viral, But Netizens' Focus was Distracted by Looking at Beautiful Police Women Ismi Aisyah's Stomach) got 72 comments and *Instagram Ismi Aisyah–Upload Foto di Atas Ranjang, Netizen: Bangun Tidur Aja Udah Cantik* (Ismi Aisyah Uploaded Pictures while on Bed, Netizens: Beautiful, Even Straight After Waking Up) received 32 comments. The news about a policewoman in the two online mass media raises a variety of constructions regarding a policewoman. This study identifies that netizens' comments not only show netizens' interest as readers, but also how they discursively construct a text. This study will analyze the text in the form of netizens' comments on the news of the beautiful police woman with the Gunther Kress' multimodal critical discourse analysis method. The method was selected due to Kress' emphasis on the importance of modality in communication. Every element of the language people use to communicate is based on what they designed, selected, limited, and added; which called as a modality. (Machin & Mayr, 2012: 186). The commentary space contains texts that are one of the manifestations of the modality. This was shown through the various trends of netizens' comments on the coverage of beautiful police woman.

According to Kress (2010) language partiality is important in multimodal discourse analysis. Modes are formed as meaning makers by a social group in certain moments. Netizens' comments on Facebook's about the coverage of a beautiful policewoman on

the online news portal *Liputan6* and *Tribunnews* are discursive actions where netizens use variety of modes that together build meaning regarding the beautiful policewoman. Various modes used by institutions or individuals do not simply appear in a text, but are influenced by interests, social context, and dominant knowledge. The text producers construct knowledge through modes.

Multimodality is an approach that identifies that a communication between one individual and another individual is not only through written or oral messages (one mode), but also various modes. Kress (2010) defines a mode as a resource for meaning making that is formed socially and culturally. Discourse itself is crucially realized in each mode (Kress, 2011: 39). Therefore ideology, interests, and power are explicit things in a multimodal approach. Critical discourse analysis attempts to denaturalize knowledge that is taken for granted. Critical discourse analysis identifies that a discourse transmits and practices power (Machin & Mayr, 2012: 4). Media text is one of areas where power is legitimized through language that becomes a tool to produce social life through construction and domination.

Conducting multimodal discourse analysis also considers social agents and modes. Comments are writing modes which consist of various capitals, such as grammar, syntax, lexicon, punctuation, graphics, font size, emoticons, and others. Each mode has different potential in making meaning. A mode is formed from the historical or social orientation of the community and their culture. Therefore the mode becomes specific and contextual. Modes are meaning resources used by humans to interact, such as through comments on social media.

This study will analyze netizens' comments on Facebook which have been classified based on their respective tendencies by using Gunther Kress's multimodal critical discourse analysis. Through the analysis of the comments, the modes used by the netizens to respond to the coverage of a beautiful policewoman will be identified. Modes will be analyzed further, namely by linking modes with social context to find reasons why these modes appear in the netizens' comments. The corpus of this research is netizens' comments on four online news articles on Facebook uploaded by *Liputan6* and *Tribunnews*. Netizens' comments relating to the reporting of the beautiful police women in the four articles are interesting to study further because they have three trends. First, the netizens commented on the physical appearance of the policewoman who was the subject of the news, in which comments led to sexist speech and emphasized that the police institution was a masculine institution. Second, netizens' comments show a male perspective, in which they construct the beauty of a policewoman as a subject in news.

Third, netizens provide criticized comments on both online mass media that refer to the quality of news and journalists.

Three trends in the netizens' comments regarding the four reports on the beautiful police woman are grouped according to their respective tendencies. Thus the collected data is data that has been identified and classified based on the scope of this research. The netizens' comments selected in this study are positioned as media texts that produce beautiful police woman discourse through the practice of online news prosumption. Social media are enough to influence the way audience responds to various media texts. The commentary space provided by social media accommodates a variety of netizens responses which are generally in the form of short and reactive sentences. However, this research is based on comments which are sentences or series of sentences that cannot be taken for granted, even if the author is anonymous or not identified. In addition, the comments can contain stereotypes, criticisms, and other interesting elements to be studied further.

2. Results and Discussion

Segregation of roles or occupations still remains even though women and men have the opportunity to work in the public domain. Society forms a prescriptive stereotype of men and women (Lips, 2014). Prescriptive stereotyping refers to the view of how men and women should act or behave. Prescriptive stereotypes can take the form of 'encouragement' from the community that women should be more gentle, warm, and caring compared to men. Rules of behaving for women and men are one of the factors that determine their roles in social life, including when they work. Women are considered more feasible to do work that is serving and caring while men do more mechanical work.

The media also produces gender discourse, such as how men and women play a role in society. Media as an instrument an constructs what should be accepted by society as a reality (Carter & Steiner, 2004: 2). The media creates a variety of realities about women. One of them is an ideal subject who fills a role in the domestic sphere. This is demonstrated by commercial advertisements on television, magazines, and other media. Studies on gender and technology identify that gender relations have implications for the way technology and media are constructed and designed (Carstensen, 2014: 485).

Online media content is inseparable from stereotypes about gender that are built in offline spaces, such as news about women. Some media reports about women appear

to be intended to attract male audiences. On one hand, even though information about women in the media is diverse, there is a tendency for the media to separate space for men and women on the topic of reporting. In case of news about beautiful police women, the mass media, especially online mass media, often still position them on the topics of news about the body and personal life. The most common problem faced by professional women is competence (Anderson, 2015). Competence seems to always be attached and owned more by men than women. Women's competence is also often associated with the physical attractiveness they have. Women are required to pay more attention to their physical appearance compared to men (Lips, 2014; Anderson, 2015).

The four news article from *Liputan6* and *Tribunnews* about a policewoman were written by male journalists. The figure of a beautiful policewoman in the news tends to be positioned as an object through discussion of the body and marital status. Online mass media journalists create and compile news sources in a simple way. They observing an event that is being discussed by netizens about the policewoman and then making it as news with kind of headlines below:

1. *Fotonya Viral, Tapi Netizen Salah Fokus Lihat Perut Polwan Cantik Ismi Aisyah* (Her Photo was Viral, But Netizens' Focus was Distracted by Looking at Beautiful Police Women Ismi Aisyah's Stomach)

2. Instagram Ismi Aisyah–Unggah Gambar di Atas Ranjang, Netizen: "Bangun Tidur Aja Udah Cantik" (Ismi Aisyah Uploaded Pictures while on Bed, Netizens: "Beautiful, Even Straight after Waking Up")

The headlines show that the journalists select netizens' comments about physical appearance of the policewoman as a news angle by including some netizens' comments regarding the matter in the news body. The title and content of the two articles above tend to reduce Ismi Aisyah's role as a policewoman. In the first news article, online mass media deliberately wanted to highlight the policewoman's stomach which was considered to distract netizens'. In fact, there is only a smart phone which is attached to the stomach of the policewoman. The policewoman figure is important to report not because she is a policewoman and has a duty in a dangerous situation, but because she has a physical appeal that is able to distract others. In this case, the mass media online uses the word 'stomach' to provoke curiosity towards readers.

Underrepresentation carried out by conventional mass media, such as television is carried out again by online mass media. In those online mass media, Aisyah is positioned as an object; the perspective of journalists who consider the discussion around the body of a policewoman interesting show that online mass media reproduce the netizens'

view of a policewomen which is based on male perspectives. In fact, the articles are distributed again by the online mass media to social media accounts, such as Facebook, and get more share and likes from Facebook's netizens.

Social media platforms raise a variety of responses to news about the policewoman from readers or netizens. The digital era makes the public an agent who has the authority to oversee the public agenda (Knight & Cook, 2013: 3). Digital journalism has undergone a shift. Anyone and anything can be a source of news, including netizens' comments. Online news can no longer be fully viewed as a product produced for a passive audience because the presence of social media operating with the principle of user-generated content has reversed it. When online mass media and conventional mass media display a beautiful policewoman as an object and their reporting becomes gender biased, social media provides more space for the emergence of construction about policewomen.

Social media provides freedom for netizens to articulate what they think about something. Some netizens counteract the sexist coverage of a police woman through their comments about the news that has been shared on Facebook. There are also comments that reproduce the construction of mass media against police women. Netizens' comments are a site for the emergence of discourse. Netizens as agents who produce text use their knowledge to reconstruct what they read. The social context in Indonesia that constructs policewomen figures can also influence how netizens write about policewoman reporting.

2.1. A 'Not qualified' journalist

News of the beautiful policewoman produced by *Liputan6* and *Tribunnews* received negative comments which directly mention the online mass media journalist. The words of the journalist who appeared in one of the comments directly showed the netizens' assessment of the quality of the news maker. Netizens use verbal modes in the form of certain vocabulary and as well as figuratively, and use visual images in the form of emoticons to assess journalists. Comments on one of the accounts named GS wrote, "*Jurnalisnya kurang piknik, otaknya mesum, dalam keadaan gawat masih sempat-sempatnya lihat polisi cantik.*" ("The journalist is lacking holiday, is a pervert, and in a dangerous situation is still able to focus on a policewoman's appearance). Other criticism of news about a policewoman was also raised by another account initialed ES who said, "*Semua wanita pake seragam polisi cantik, gagah, dan berwibawa. Yang meliput atau wartawannya otak ngeres....*" ("Every woman who wears a policewoman uniform is beautiful, brave, and authoritative. Those who cover or report have a dirty

mind…"). In addition, on other news articles similar comments also appears. Among other comments written by PIS, SS, and DQ below:

"Dasar otak ngeras melulu... Pikirannya mesum sih." ("A man with a dirt brain…His mind is pervert.")

"Liat orang cantik matanya ijo, pikirannya ngeres." (" His eyes become green when he is looking at a beautiful person, his mind is dirty.")

"Pokok e nengono wong wedok ayu matane biru." ("Anyway, if there is a beautiful woman, his eyes become blue.")

One expression that appears in more than one comment is "lack of holiday". Term "lack holiday" several times appears in everyday conversation or in the form of written text on social media and is generally directed to someone or group of people whose actions are considered strange, unusual, or tend to harm others. The word "lack holiday" which is a colloquial language used by netizens to assess journalists in reporting the figure of a beautiful policewoman. The "'lack of holiday" journalist' in the comment above accuses the journalist to be one who produces trivial news and chooses topics that are considered unimportant by his readers. The choice of the angle of the news regarding the status of policewomen's marriage is actually something that tends to be unattractive to netizens on Facebook.

Next to the word "lack of holiday" there are several other words with similar meaning. These words include "perverted brain" and "dirty mind", as well as figures that describe a person's behavior through the eyes, such as "green eyes" and "blue eyes". Through these comments, netizens identified that journalists who make news are men. Heteronormativity constructs male sexual attraction to women and vice versa as something normal. Netizens' comments that chose to use words like 'perverted brain' and 'dirty mind' gave a title to journalists regarding news about a policewoman, showing that netizens construct the policewoman as a sexual object in the news. The beautiful predicate given by journalists to the policewomen, and highlighting policewomen in terms of personal life (marital status) and body (stomach) is interpreted by netizens as one of the ways men look women.

2.2. Feminine incompetence affirmation of police professionals

A policewoman works in a system which is considered to be male-dominated area. There is an assumption that the police as a masculine institution influences public construction of a policewoman who is involved in it. The emergence of policewoman Ismi Aisyah, called the beautiful policewoman in the bomb incident in Bandung 2017, was viewed by the mass media as something contrasting to the situation. A policewoman considered to be center of attention, in the midst of critical and dangerous zone. The existence of a policewoman who also served as the personal secretary of the West Java Regional Police Chief at that time was not merely a physical presence, but she carried out her duties as other police personnels did at the scene, but the way in which the online mass media online mass media framed Aisyah was problematic. News about a policewoman tends to downgrade her presence and duties as a professional woman.

Figure 1: One of news article headline in Liputan6 about a beautiful policewoman. *Source:* https://www.liputan6.com/news/read/2870503/penasaran-status-polwan-cantik-di-bom-bandung-ini-bocorannya.

The picture above shows that *Liputan6* selects the main photo that shows the policewoman as the central subject. Th photographer chose a situation where she is standing between men and holding a camera. There are no other women in the photo. In addition, the word "status" referred to the headline is her marital status. The news tries to build readers' curiosity about the status of a policewoman by using the question sentence as its title. The content of the news was made based on uploaded photos on her Instagram account which showed she was feeding a child. The photo leads netizens to ask whether the child was hers or not and the question of whether she was married or single. The news story containing her statement that she was single was written with a direct quote. In the closing section of the news, the journalist described her appearance at the time of handling the bomb incident such as to complete information about her involvement in the incident:

Sementara, dalam penggerebekan terduga teroris itu, Ismi tampak mengenakan seragam sambal tangan kanannya menenteng kamera yang dikalungkan di lehernya. Tangan kirinya memegang handphone. Tak hanya itu, sebuah ponsel lain berwarna keemasan juga terselip di pinggang

kirinya. "Saya enggak bawa senjata, senjata saya cuma kamera," kata
Ismi. (Liputan6, 28 Februari 2017).

Meanwhile, in the alleged terrorist raids, Ismi appeared to be wearing a
uniform while her right hand was carrying a camera hung around her neck.
Her left hand holds a hand phone. Not only that, another golden hand phone
was also tucked on her left waist. "I don't carry a weapon, my weapon is just
a camera," said Ismi. (*Liputan6*, 28 February 2017).

News positions her on two ways. First, as a woman who was given the title of 'beautiful
policewoman' by the mass media, she was considered to attract public attention.
Therefore, personal information about her, such as her marital status, is considered
important by the mass media. Second, online mass media stated that her role in the
police was far from using equipment that was considered synonymous with the police,
such as a weapon. This was emphasized at the end of the news where journalists
provided a fairly detailed description of the attributes inherent to her body.

The news has also been distributed by *Liputan6* to Facebook, like other news. Knowl-
edge about the policewoman developed by *Liputan6* was responded to by netizens.
The netizens' response, which becomes the focus of analysis in this section. indicates
that the reproduction of knowledge surrounding the policewoman that was built on
previous interaction from netizens. *Liputan6* news uploaded an article titled *Penasaran*
Status Polwan Cantik di Bom Bandung? Ini Bocorannya (Curious about the Status of
Beautiful Police women in Bandung Bomb? This is the leak) which produced a number
of netizens' comments highlighting the task of a policewoman as a policewoman at
the time. Verbal and visual modes were raised by netizens through their comments to
construct a policewoman.

Netizens chose to use verbal modes in the form of choosing negative words, such as
"not dominant" or "just a photographer". The word "just" and "not" are negative words
which refers to photographing activities that are not usually done by police officers, both
by men or women. Taking pictures in that case is trivial, because that was followed by
the last sentence construing that photographing did not make the police the dominant
subject.

Another comment showed a similar perspective. It questioned Aisyah's achievements
related to her work: *"Don't you have other news? It only focuses on her beauty.*
She is just a photographer.*"* The comment contained two
sentences addressed to the news producers and the policewoman. The netizen has
the perspective that photographing is not a significant job in police duties. He asked

what her achievements were and continued the sentence with "just a photographer", thus underestimating her work as a policewoman.

Each comment is a product of someone's unique writing that is related to a cultural context within a certain time (Reader, 2015: 23). The netizens' perspective can arise from two things, namely by looking at the main photo of the article and seeing the main photo of the article and reading the policewoman's statement, that she only has a camera as a weapon. These words don't just appear, but are socially formed. Modes used by netizens to respond to news about her, such as verbal modes of negative words, are considered by netizens to give the authority to respond to her competence as a policewoman. The selection of negative words regarding her competencies is related to the cultural aspects that surround the place where the mode is produced. Patriarchal culture in Indonesia constructs that the police is a masculine job, more suitable for men, and synonymous with weapons. This is a cultural resource that influences netizens' views of the policewoman in the news.

Virginity tests as one of the qualification requirements in policewomen recruitment has shown the strong patriarchal culture within the institution and placed policewomen in a very masculine work structure. Netizens' comments on the role of a policewoman in the police force lead to feminine incompetence that is often attached to women in the field of work that they do. Feminine incompetence was attached to the policewoman Ismi Aisyah by online mass media reportage and by netizens as prosumer of the news. Feminine incompetence is often experienced by women, especially women who work in the realm of work that is considered masculine by the community (Lips, 2002).

Feminine incompetence is a stereotype that women are difficult to become authoritative figures in the place they work. If women have this opportunity, they will automatically be seen by others as lower in status because they are women (Lips, 2002: 114). The realm of operational work within the police such as intelligence and the handling of terror are considered strategic fields. In contrast, non-operational fields, such as those conducted by a policewoman as the secretary of the West Java Regional Police Chief and documenting police activities are seen as insignificant in the police's career path. In addition, the emergence of negative verbal modes of a policewoman competence also emerged, due to the attachment to the modes raised by the relevant news articles.

3. Conclusion

Based on the results of an analysis of netizens' comments on online news coverage by *Liputan6* and *Tribunnews* about a policewoman, it can be concluded that there

are inline perceptions between netizens and the mass media concerned with her position as a policewoman. The figure of this policewoman, Ismi Aisyah, in the news suggests that women are able to attract attention and are seen as being underestimated by the online mass media and also netizens. Online mass media positions her as a news subject in trivial news topics and tends to produce sensationalist reports. A policewoman's profession as a police officer also experiences trivialization, because photographing activities were constructed by netizens as non-strategic jobs within the police. In addition, there are also criticisms of netizens who are more directed at journalists. This shows that netizens' views on a policewoman news are a way of looking at men towards women.

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