Potentials of Islamic Tourism: A Case Study of Malaysia on East Coast Economic Region

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Abstract: There were some barriers to develop Islamic tourism- inadequate research activities, appropriate images, proper policy and guidelines, marketing problems and lack of coordination were remaining in this region. The aim of this tourism was to obtain the satisfaction of Allah and attraction to the tourists. Tourism is the second largest income generating sector of Malaysia. Islamic tourism is a new tourism destination in the world today. Through this tourism, religious duty was performed as well as knowledge achieved for wider dimension. International and domestic tourist arrival data for Malaysia and East Coast Economic Region used in this study. The study revealed that there were huge opportunities to develop Islamic tourism in the East Coast Economic Region and a lot of natural beauties, cultural and archeological heritage, historic civilizations, and religious places, which might be potential tourism destinations. Various organizations including Organisation of Islamic Conference can play vital role in this regard. So, if Malaysia develop the Islamic tourism in East Coast Economic Region, the present and future generations will know the glorious heritage of Islam and it also ensures their economic sustainability.

Key words: Islamic tourism, Satisfaction, Attraction, East Coast Economic Region.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the largest earning sectors of Malaysia. Tourism industry effects positively on the Malaysian economy for increasing foreign exchange earnings, and employment opportunities. World Tourism Organization (2005) addresses that Malaysia place 14th in the ranking of counties by international tourism arrivals. Tourist arrivals to Malaysia rank number three after Britain and Canada among the 53 Commonwealth countries. By 2005, tourism industry is a key foreign exchange earner for Malaysia, contributing to over 40% of the country’s balance of payment (EPU, 2006). The tourism sector generated US$18.1 billion in export revenue, representing 10.1% of exports in 2006, making the second largest contributor of foreign exchange earnings to the country after the manufacturing sector (WTTC, 2006). Before its dependence in 1957, the Malaysian economy was heavily dependent on primary commodities mainly tin, rubber, palm oil and petroleum products. The Malaysian government has serious attention to develop tourism industry after decrease in oil and the world economic recession in the middle of the 1980s. The Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism had established in 1987 and later upgraded it to the Ministry of Tourism in 2004 (Fateh et al. 2009). The government has allocated amount of fund to tourism industry besides providing sufficient basic infrastructure. Malaysian government has been spending RM1.8 billion under the Ninth Malaysian Plan (2006–2010), on upgrading tourist destinations and infrastructure, as well as on marketing promotions in major source markets (Government Malaysia, 2006).

Various efforts have been taken by the government to make Malaysia as one of the developed country in Asia. Economic contribution through tourism sector has become one of the main contributors to the country’s economy. Physical and infrastructure development have been given priority by the government and established tourism projects with tourism attractions for their economic prospects (Jamal et al., 2007). Malaysia is a country with diverse lifestyles, ethnic groups, and religions here living together peacefully. Islam is its official religion, but the citizen may practice any religion. Temples, mosques, and churches are often situated in the same area of the country. After independence, Malaysian concerns over western influences impeded tourism development (Din, 1982). Tourism development continued with vision for national development, Civilization Islam, progressiveness in parallel with Islamic teachings (Islam, 2005). The main objective of
Civilization Islam, socioeconomic development, counters the socioeconomic underdevelopment that hinders tourism in many Muslim countries. The country's multi-religious population and the tension between Islamic modernization and revivalism provide an interesting research context for tourism development (Din, 1989). The world's 57 Muslim countries have earned less than 10% of global tourism revenues. The four countries that dominate Muslim tourism—Morocco, Egypt, Turkey, and Malaysia—received 17.5 million tourists in 2004 (Islamic countries Seek Bigger Piece of Tourism Pie, 2005).

Tourism is related to various aspects of Islam. Several researchers have given emphasize on how Islam supported in different tourism activities to enhance religious and social functions. In Islam, prompt the Muslim to travel for searching the beauty and creating adventure of Allah. Every year over a million of Muslim visit Saudi Arab in the time of Hajj. Again about 0.5 million people visit Bangladesh every year in the purpose of World Ejtema. Din (1989) emphasizes the influence of the religion on tourism movements and policies in Islamic countries as a whole, concluding that travel is relatively low in volume. Some Islamic countries find tourists more acceptable than others, depending on the degree of liberalism as well as personal gains and losses. The decision about whether Islamic destinations should seek to meet the demands of international tourists and have risk when the visitors are following of Muslim traditions or not (Henderson, 2003). The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) have emphasized for developing the tourism activities in the member countries. The OIC has held two Tourism Ministers Meetings and a conference since 2000 which have discussed expanding tourism through improved research and training, marketing and upgraded infrastructure. In these meetings, speakers give much of the emphasis is on tourism as a vehicle for reinforcing the solidarity of the Islamic community. They also discuss the ways for considering non-Muslim visitors are more acceptable in Muslim countries and there is recognition of the value of working with the World Tourism Organization and other international agencies. Greater travel by Muslims within the Islamic world could lead to better understanding, stimulate collaboration and serve the common good. At the latest meeting, the speakers have advised creating more Islamic tour packages devoted to a Muslim heritage which has been largely ignored (Sayed, 2001). The Islamic Development Bank (IDB), expressed support for tourism in accordance with the Shariah. The bank has allocated fund for tourism development in Muslim countries in this connection. The aim of this study is to obtain the potentiality to develop Islamic tourism in Malaysia and ECER in order to get the satisfaction of Allah and attraction to the tourists.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Data Attainment:

The study is conducted in University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi since January, 2010 to December, 2010. The data for analysis is perceived from the secondary sources. The significant manipulations for acquired data are Islamic tourism on East Coast Economic Region (ECER), Malaysia. The corresponding outcomes are demonstrated from the analysis of collected data.

Islamic Tourism:

Tourism is traditionally closely linked to religion which has acted as a powerful motive for traveling. Religious buildings, rituals, festivals and religious events are important tourist attractions for those are the followers of the particular systems of belief represented (Henderson, 2003). The evolution of tourism in Europe and the Middle East, revealing different patterns partly linked to religious doctrine (Ritter, 1975). Now, research has been conducted for identifying relationship in various aspects of religion and tourism. The commercial potential of the religious travel market has also been highlighted in the Muslim countries (Bywater, 1994; Russell, 1999). Islamic tourism is a new tourism destination in the world today. There are 54 Muslim countries in the world. Most of the countries situated in an important nerve point of the world. Due to the geographical and economic importance of Muslim countries, this tourism increases day by day. Islamic tourism will be famous in those countries as well as all over the world. Islamic tourism is not one type of tourism, in the case of secular tourism. This tourism would help to extend the prospects for intellectual investigation. Some scholars have been describing this tourism as religious tourism also. It is of two types: tourism through which a religious duty is performed, and tourism by which knowledge is recorded and quoted for wider dissemination. Should the aim of this be to obtain the Blessings of God, it would achieve another objective - and that is to attract tourists. Islam has encouraged tourism for the faithful in the practice of life’s affairs and to obtain experience and maturity. For instance, Muslims from Andalusia to China, India, Persia and Turkey to Indonesia have traversed the earth by the orders of God, both in search of work and to acquire knowledge (Jubayr, 2002). Islamic tourism has a great impact on the tourists and travelers as well as on Muslim societies.
Satisfaction:
In Islamic tourism, the visitors have traveled in a place for the satisfaction of Allah and their recreation. Tourism is a part of life and not contradictory with the fundamental theme of Islam. Every year millions of Muslims have been visiting different historic sites of Saudi Arabia during the Hajj period. These sites are not related to Hajj, but the Muslims have inspired towards Islam by visiting the sites. Thus, Saudi Arabia spends hundreds of millions of dollars to showcase its cultural heritage for the visitors. The examples of Egypt, Syria and Jordan are also memorable. They have managed to exploit their Islamic heritage and historic sites, turning them into dreams that everyone wants to see. So, tourism in Islam is a purposeful activity that aims to achieve physical, social and spiritual satisfaction along with Allah’s blessings.

Attraction:
Islamic tourism is one of the most important resources particularly in Muslim countries which have a rich and diverse heritage. This permanent wealth and treasure have attracted Muslim visitors throughout history and will also attract hundreds of non-Muslims. It is important that Islamic tourism must be respectful to Islamic values and human beings in light of Islam. It may be a source of prosperity for Muslim countries and show consideration and respect for their history. Human beings can be affected by depression and travel may be the best way to remove it. When tourism will discover the traditions and cultures of any country, then it considered great attractive to the visitors. Islamic tourism is a powerful weapon to meet the attraction of visitors religious fulfillment.

East Coast Economic Region:
Malaysia is a moderate Muslim country of south-east Asia. There are a lot of Islamic infrastructures, mosques, Islamic heritage sites in Malaysia. This country also has attractive Muslim cultures and customs. So, the country may be an Islamic tourism destination in the world. Tourism Malaysia has sold the country as a safe destination with a familiar culture which is able to cater to Islamic travellers in the country (The Straits Times, 2002). The Eastern Coast Economic Region (ECER) involves three east coast states of Malaysia, namely Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang and some parts of Johor. It is formed to be focused on the socio-economic and industrial development of the region. East Malaysia is still exposed to the privileging of Islam and gives priority the erection and redevelopment of mosques and other Islamic infrastructures confirms the attached to its affirmation by the federal powers (Cleary, 1997). State Mosque and Islamic Museum in Kelantan, State Mosque of Pahang, Batu Bersurat, Masjid Abidin, Masjid Tengku Tengah Zaharah, Masjid Kampung Tuan, Kota Lama Duyong and Islamic Civilization Park in Terengganu are the famous Islamic tourism destination in this region. The present study discusses the potentiality of Islamic tourism in ECER as well as Malaysia. The study also addressed the barriers of promoting Islamic tourism and necessary actions for developing this tourism in Malaysia.

Table 1: International Tourists Arrival in OIC and Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tourist Arrivals (million)</th>
<th>Market Share (%)</th>
<th>Growth Rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World Total</td>
<td>457.2</td>
<td>550.3</td>
<td>696.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIC Total</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>65.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source: World Tourism Organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 reveals that in OIC countries international tourists’ arrival were 34.3, 42.9 and 65.6 millions in the year 1990, 1995, and 2000 respectively. In these years market shares of international tourists’ arrival were 7.5%, 7.8%, and 9.4% in terms of world markets. The growth rates of international tourists’ arrival were 4.5% and 8.9% on 1990-1995 and 1995-2000 periods respectively. On the other hand, Malaysia attracted 7.4, 7.5 and 10.2 million international tourists’ and market shares of international tourists’ arrivals were 21.6%, 17.8%, and 15.5% in terms of OIC markets on the year 1990, 1995, and 2000 respectively. The growth rates of international tourists’ arrival were 0.3% and 6.3% on 1990-1995 and 1995-2000 periods respectively.

Table 2 shows that international tourist’s arrival in top ten OIC countries during 1996-2000. In 1996 Malaysia was 4th position to arrival of international tourists. But in 2000, Malaysia reached 2nd position among the OIC countries’ by their tourism friendly activities.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2: International Tourists Arrival in top ten OIC Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>4697</td>
<td>6372</td>
<td>6055</td>
<td>3732</td>
<td>5925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>1567</td>
<td>4947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>1887</td>
<td>2380</td>
<td>1417</td>
<td>2825</td>
<td>3272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>3908</td>
<td>2910</td>
<td>2229</td>
<td>2357</td>
<td>2552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>1374</td>
<td>1133</td>
<td>1288</td>
<td>1440</td>
<td>1610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>1160</td>
<td>1126</td>
<td>1322</td>
<td>1321</td>
<td>1233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Tourism Organization

![Fig. 1: Foreign tourist arrivals.](image1)

Figure 1 examines the foreign tourist arrivals in Malaysia and three east coast states during 1996-2006. The growth of foreign tourist arrivals to Malaysia has been increasing from 7.13 million in 1996 to 17.55 million in 2006 and average annual growth rate (AAGR) of 9.41%. The east coast states have displayed also increasing trend in foreign tourist arrivals. The AAGR are 6.53%, 1.91% and 8.02% in Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang states respectively.

![Fig. 2: Domestic tourist arrivals.](image2)

Figure 2 reveals the domestic tourist arrivals in three east coast states during 1996-2006. The east coast states have shown increasing trend in domestic tourist arrivals on the year 2006 than the year 1996. The AAGR of domestic tourist arrivals are 9.7%, 4.31% and 11.9% in Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang states respectively.

Table 3: Forecast of Foreign Tourist Arrivals, Malaysia and the ECER, 2005-2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>No. of Foreign Tourists in Base Year 2005</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>Annual Average Growth Rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>16,431,055</td>
<td>28,189,762</td>
<td>48,363,459</td>
<td>82,974,245</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Optimistic</td>
<td>16,431,055</td>
<td>24,585,901</td>
<td>36,788,053</td>
<td>55,046,217</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base</td>
<td>16,431,055</td>
<td>21,373,955</td>
<td>27,803,812</td>
<td>36,167,942</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Pessimistic</td>
<td>16,431,055</td>
<td>24,585,901</td>
<td>36,788,053</td>
<td>55,046,217</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECER</td>
<td>1,918,535</td>
<td>3,292,219</td>
<td>6,175,327</td>
<td>11,079,116</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High- Optimistic</td>
<td>1,918,535</td>
<td>2,872,153</td>
<td>4,709,406</td>
<td>7,378,437</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base</td>
<td>1,918,535</td>
<td>2,495,682</td>
<td>3,566,419</td>
<td>4,862,545</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low- Pessimistic</td>
<td>1,918,535</td>
<td>2,495,682</td>
<td>3,566,419</td>
<td>4,862,545</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ECER Master Plan
Table 3 presents forecasts of foreign tourist arrivals to Malaysia and the ECER on the basis of three scenarios: Base, High and Low. In the Base scenario, the 9th Malaysian Plan forecast of AAGR of 8.4% is adopted, but the ECER increase its share and the AAGR is assumed to rise to 9.4%. For the region, on the basis of Base scenario, foreign tourist arrivals would be expected to total 2.872 million (2010), 4.709 million (2015) and some 7.378 million by 2020.

Table 4: Forecast of Domestic Tourist Arrivals in the ECER, 2005-2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of Domestic Tourists in Base Year 2005</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>Annual Average Growth Rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>8,307,921</td>
<td>13,078,651</td>
<td>20,588,919</td>
<td>32,411,874</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base</td>
<td>8,307,921</td>
<td>11,382,572</td>
<td>15,595,109</td>
<td>21,366,652</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>8,307,921</td>
<td>9,867,204</td>
<td>11,719,143</td>
<td>13,918,665</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ECER Master Plan

Table 4 shows the forecasts of foreign tourist arrivals to Malaysia and the ECER on the basis of 3 scenarios: Base, High and Low. In the Base scenario, the 9th Malaysian Plan forecast of AAGR of 6.5% for ECER is predicted and under this scenario some 11.3 million domestic tourists are expected to visit in 2010, over 15.6 million by 2015 and 21.4 million by 2020.

Potentiality to Develop Islamic Tourism in Malaysia and ECER:

Tourism is the dominate and imaging industry in Malaysia. It is a purposeful activity in Islam that aims to achieve physical, social and spiritual goals. The physical goal leads to a healthy and stress-free life, which subsequently lets Muslims serve God better. Islam encourages visiting Muslim brothers, as this helps strengthen among Muslim community. The spiritual goal reinforces one’s submission to God through the beauty and bounty of God’s creation (Hashim et al.). So, the teaching of Islam influences to enhance the tourism activities in Muslim countries. In December 2004, World Tourism Organization (WTO) nominated Malaysia among 38 countries as the world’s top emerging tourism destinations. Malaysia has a huge opportunities to develop Islamic tourism for economic sustainability as well as fulfill the religious sprit. The main advantages ECER of Malaysia in this regard are as follows:

Natural Beauties:

Malaysia has a lot of full natural resources and beauties. Specially, ECER has beautiful and untouched coastlines, mountains, waterfalls, exotic birds and wildlife, sea beaches, Mangrove and tropical forest, beautiful islands and lakes.

Cultural and Archeological Heritage:

Heritage tourism is now a potential tourism destination. The states in ECER of Malaysia have riche Islamic traditions and customs along with each country’s self cultures. In Kuala Lumpur, Twin Tower is the second highest building in the world. Those are attractive to the all type’s tourists.

Historic Heritages:

There are some historic heritages were established in the three east coast regions of Malaysia. Therefore, a lot of historic sites, building and mosques were situated in this area. Among them, Kota Bharu Handicraft Village and Craft Museum, Royal Museum, State Museum, Istana Balai Besar of Kelantan, Cottage industries, Colonial architecture of Kuala Lipis, Assorted buildings in the Royal town of Pekan, Sungai Lembing Museum, sultan Abu Bakar museum, Arts and Cultural Centre of Pahang, Desa Craft Handicraft Centre, Traditional boat-building, Istana Maziah, Traditional houses, Bukit Besi, State Museum Complex of Terengggunu are mentionable.

Islamic Heritage and Places:

East coast regions are host of Islamic heritages and holiest places. Among them, State Mosque and Islamic Museum of Kelantan, State Mosque of Pahang and Masjid Abidin, Masjid Tengku Tengah Zaharah, Kota Lama Duyong and Masjid Kampung Tuan of Terengganu are maybe suitable destination for Islamic tourism.

Historic Events:

Every year several programs have arranged depends on some historic sites of ECER. Landing of Japanese troops on 1941 at Kota Bharu in Kelantan, Bukit Keledung, Bukit Puteri and Pulau Bidong of Terengganu may
be selected in this regard. Islamic tourism can be operated by centering these type’s historic places. In spite of huge opportunities, Malaysia not yet develop Islamic tourism for some limitations. These are;

**Inadequate Research Activities:**
Tourism is a researchable matter. There are huge research have been conducting all over the world on this topic. Researchers engaged to investigate and find out how tourism may be a tool for sustainable development, livelihood security and economic development. But Malaysia have not proper and adequate initiatives to research on Islamic tourism.

**Appropriate Images:**
Islamic tourism hasn’t developed as a potential tourism destination in Malaysia. For this reason, this tourism not attract the tourists hugely. As a result, Islamic tourism not develop appropriate image in Malaysia.

**Proper Policy and Guidelines:**
Malaysia could not develop common policy and strategy for Islamic tourism. Even they are not yet able to build up proper international relationship in this point.

**Marketing Problem:**
Some tourism dominated countries adopt modern and suitable marketing strategy for developing their tourism industry. They also focus their tourism places to the tourists with market oriented ways. Due to proper marketing strategy, Islamic tourism could not focus highly among the tourists.

**Lack of Co-ordination:**
Tourism oriented countries have developed various agreements and co-operations among them in this sector for increasing business opportunity. Lack of these type’s co-operations between Muslim countries and agencies have deprived Malaysia from the benefits of Islamic tourism sector.

**Recommendations to Develop Islamic Tourism in ECER of Malaysia:**
Malaysia can ensure an Islamic tourism market in the country by strong and positive role. By utilizing the tourism potentiality in all over the country, Malaysia has taken initiative to foster this sector for their economic benefit. The following steps will be taken in this regard.

**Develop Infrastructure and Communication:**
In the tourism places must be ensured proper infrastructure and communication to attract the tourists. Islamic resorts and hotels, as well as Islamic destinations will shape the tourism activities; alcohol-free accommodations in which gender-segregation and the dress code will be strictly respected and controlled; available prayer-rooms on site; and “Islamic” transportation facilities (Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004).

**Arranged Islamic Tourism Events:**
Malaysia should be arranged gender segregated sport and wellness facilities and “Islamic” entertainment programs in tourism places. Elements of this concept are already implemented by Saudi Arabia and Iran in their tourism industry.

**Positive Media Role:**
Media can play a vital role to foster Islamic tourism activities. They also encourage that tourism by their positive involvement. Malaysia can establish satellite channel, newspaper and other media house for promoting Islamic tourism.

**Proper Marketing:**
Malaysia can apply suitable marketing strategy for developing tourism. They must be building up positive image as a Muslim country to focus the Islamic tourism.

**Co-ordination Between Muslim Countries:**
Malaysia can arrange joint tourism packages with other Muslim countries to attract huge tourists. By this package programs they can ensure broader economic activities for the country.
**Proper Role of OIC:**

OIC is the highest platform for the Muslim world. Malaysia can create and maintain an international linkage with OIC to increase their tourism activities.

**Increases Tourism Research:**

Malaysia should be allocated necessary funds for continuous research activities in Islamic tourism. They can establish research institutes and sponsor the tourism scholars in this regard.

**Conclusion:**

Islamic tourism is a way to perform the religious duty. By this tourism Muslims have to invite the whole world towards the path of Islam. It may be an economic tool for the Muslim countries. Malaysia can huge invest in Islamic tourism. Otherwise, they can create economic involvement and job opportunities for poor Muslim countries people by this tourism activities. As a result, there is a balance condition will remain in the economic sector of the Muslim world. “Islamic tourism” has a chance to succeed as a part of multiple concepts for tourism developments. Intra-Arab and intra-Muslim tourism may indeed contribute to stabilizing the national tourism industries and have the ability to play a positive role as insertions and supplemental options in the tourism landscape (Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004). East coast region is good mix of royal, religious, historic and cultural resources with in Malaysia. For these suitable condition, ECER has huge opportunities to develop Islamic tourism. So, if Malaysia develop the Islamic tourism in ECER, the present and future generations will know the glorious heritage of Islam and it also ensures the economic sustainability of local people.

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