Predictors of Sustainable Community-based Enterprises in Southern Philippines

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the determinants of sustainable community-based enterprises in terms of their social and economic benefits and operational durability. The researcher used sequential explanatory mixed methods, conducting a cross-sectional survey of 300 active members, three focus group discussions, and eleven key informant interviews with CBE leaders. Data gathered through interviews were thematically analyzed, while data gathered through the survey was analyzed using inferential statistics. The research hypotheses were tested using a Generalized Additive Model. The results suggested that Entrepreneurial Leadership, Community Participation, and Business Continuity Planning are the determinants of the economic benefits of CBEs. Entrepreneurial Leadership and Responsive Business Model explain the social benefits of CBEs, while a Responsive Business Model, Community Participation, and Entrepreneurial Leadership explain its operational durability. This study suggests that Entrepreneurial Leadership predicts all three dimensions of sustainable CBE-one that provides social and economic benefits and are operationally durable. This study is primarily of interest to the Government and Non-Government Agencies (including International NGOs) advocating, designing, funding, and implementing post-war reconstruction and poverty-reduction programs using CBEs as a strategy. Building and strengthening the entrepreneurial leadership capability of the CBE leaders may be given primary consideration, among other interventions, to ensure sustainable CBEs.

Keywords: Sustainability, Community-based Enterprises, Southern Philippines

Introduction

Community-based Enterprise is defined as an aggregation of people who share a geographical location, a culture, ethnic origin, or other relational characteristics formed when the local community's networks, resources, and structures are employed in its entrepreneurial activities (Peredo & Chrisman, 2017). CBEs have emerged as a poverty reduction strategy used in poverty-stricken communities in line with the global trend of participatory, inclusive, and sustainable community development. They are established primarily in countries with relatively high political instability and perceived corruption but with diverse poverty levels (Soviana, 2015). Moreover, CBEs are regarded as having the potential to empower disadvantaged communities through collective involvement (Salmivaara, 2017). Development practitioners viewed CBEs as an antithesis of the conventional approach to poverty, where massive interventions are conceived by the implementing agencies rather than the community.

Philippines is among the leading countries actively promoting community-based enterprises in Asia (Ballesteros & Llanto, 2017). The country's number of Community-based Enterprises as a sub-model of Social Enterprise has more than tripled in the last decade. Of the 34% growth in jobs in the Philippine economy, it is estimated that 5% come from social enterprises (UN.ESCAP, 2017). This reaffirms the use of CBEs as a transformative poverty reduction strategy. However, only a few of the CBEs in the country are sustained. The factors contributing to the sustainability of the CBEs have always been explored separately through qualitative approaches such as case studies, thus failing to investigate the extent of their contribution using inferential testing. Thus, there needs to be more quantitative evidence of community-based enterprises in the Philippines (UN.ESCAP, 2017). This study aimed to determine the factors that explain the sustainability of CBEs with social and economic benefits and

operational durability as domains of interest. By answering this research objective, the study offers practical and policy implications critical to the sustainability of CBEs in the realm of sustainable local community development.

Literature Review and Research Hypotheses

Entrepreneurial Leadership

Entrepreneurial leadership has been defined as a leadership style in which leaders influence and direct their subordinates to identify and explore entrepreneurial opportunities (Renko et al., 2015) and identifying possibilities and dangers while raising money and building capacities to bring about social benefits (Parwez, 2017). Previous study found that entrepreneurial leadership resulted in greater exploratory and exploitative innovation in enterprises (Huang et al., 2014) thus entails guiding and influencing the behavior of group members to achieve organizational goals, including identifying and utilizing entrepreneurial opportunities (Renko et al., 2015). This factor involves influencing the CBE's internal affairs and maximizing and benefiting from external opportunities. Thus, the following hypotheses are hereby proposed:

HO: Entrepreneurial Leadership is not a significant predictor of the economic benefits of CBE.

HO: Entrepreneurial Leadership is not a significant predictor of the social benefits of CBE.

HO: Entrepreneurial Leadership is not a significant predictor of the operational durability of CBE.

Social Capital

Social capital has been described as a lubricant that facilitates getting things done which allows people to work together and to access benefits from social relationships (Claridge, 2014). Peredo and Chrisman (2017) argued that social capital undergirds the provision of necessities in the CBEs that have no access to capital markets, are materially disadvantaged, impoverished, and where land is scarce. For these CBEs to maximize their social capital, they often require outside investment from the formal organization which may take many forms, ranging from money for face-to-face meetings, technology to support distributed communities, to enabling experts to spend time providing assistance to others in the network (Lesser & Prusak, 2013). Such investments in social capital can contribute to the sustainability of CBEs.

Thus, the following hypotheses are hereby proposed:

HO: Social capital is not a significant predictor of the economic benefits of CBE.

HO: Social capital is not a significant predictor of the social benefits of CBE.

HO: Social capital is not a significant predictor of the operational durability of CBE.

Community Participation

Mubita et al. (2017) cite Sherry Arnstein's understanding of participation, where she equates it with the concept of power; participation can enhance the empowerment of the locals and can provide local people with the opportunity to think and develop solutions for themselves. Community participation promote the development of interpersonal relationships (Simplican et al., 2015) and create opportunities for local people to participate in planning, decision making, project implementation, allocation and distribution of resources (Rashied & Begum, 2016). Consequently, participation can lead to the empowerment of the weak and disadvantaged (Mubita et al., 2017) claimed to be critical for the success of CBEs (Soviana, 2015). Thus, the following hypotheses are hereby proposed:

HO: Community participation is not a significant predictor of the economic benefits of CBE.

HO: Community participation is not a significant predictor of the social benefits of sustainability CBE.

H○: Community participation is not a significant predictor of the operational durability of CBE.

Responsive Business Model

The business model has been described as an architecture or design that incorporates processes to accomplish a specific purpose, the core capabilities and resources of various business actors, their roles, and the potential benefits for the various actors (Gray et al., 2018; Veit et al., 2014). For a business model to be responsive, Schoemaker et al. (2018) argued that essential functions of the business model should consider identifying unmet customer needs, specifying the technology and organization that will address them, and capturing value. A responsive and dynamic business model helps organizations (CBEs) and their partners to identify and exploit market opportunities (Gray et al., 2018). It can generate a steady and secure revenue stream that can enhance the autonomy of the Community (based) Enterprise and, thus, its durability (Van Meerkerk et al., 2018). Thus, the following hypotheses are hereby proposed:

H○: Responsive business model is not a significant predictor of the economic benefits of CBE.

H○: Responsive business model is not a significant predictor of the social benefits of CBE.

H○: Responsive business model is not a significant predictor of the operational durability of CBE.

Business Continuity Planning

A community-based Enterprise's sustainability lies in its capacity to continually operate in a turbulent environment and under adverse circumstances. CBEs in Southern Philippines operate in a man-made and natural calamities-stricken community. Fani and Subriadi (2019) describe BCP a strategy to recover business operations in the event of an emergency by anticipating breakdowns to mitigate risks, minimize the effect of a crisis, and reduce the time required to resume "business as usual". Moreover, according to Snedaker and Rima (2014), each business will not have an identical BCP because each organization is unique and has various requirements. Business Continuity Planning has been perceived as a proactive technique for addressing potential disasters and threats to CBEs. Thus, the following hypotheses are hereby proposed:

H○: Business Continuity Planning is not a significant predictor of the economic benefits of CBE.

H○: Business Continuity Planning is not a significant predictor of the social benefits of CBE.

H○: Business Continuity Planning is not a significant predictor of the operational durability of CBE.

Social Benefits

Community-based Enterprises are generally perceived as socially beneficial since disadvantaged and vulnerable people are included and integrated (Terziev et al., 2019). Members of CBE collaborate in creating or recognizing a market opportunity and organizing themselves to respond to that opportunity (Peredo & Chrisman, 2017). This includes improving members' access to institutional services (Juma et al., 2015), serving as a safety net, and broadening social networks (Soviana, 2015; Barth et al., 2015; Kim & Lim, 2017).

Economic Benefits

A common thread throughout the literature is the assumption that CBEs are often formed when the source of people's livelihood is threatened. Exploiting and adding economic value to the local Community's assets and resources leads to creating jobs and economic development (Tshikovhi & Mvula, 2014) CBEs' innovations could address the social and environmental challenges to improve the economic well-being of individual members and society (Juma et al., 2015) by making the most of the available resources, capabilities, and assets in the area as input and output for its economic activity. In this paper, the economic benefit includes creating livelihood opportunities and source of income for the members (Purusottama et al., 2018); enhancing entrepreneurial skills

(Peredo & Chrisman, 2017); expanding the livelihood network (Parwez, 2017) and creating profitable products from local resources (Dhewanto et al., 2020; Tshikovhi & Mvula, 2014).

Operational Durability

CBEs generally operate in a turbulent environment stricken by the confluence of multiple threats. Established organizations where resources, systems, and technology are in place and thus can quickly bounce back and return to the business at the normal state. However, CBEs are more fragile as their operational activities are dependent on their existing cultural structures (Peredo & Chrisman, 2017), social resources, and networks in areas affected by collisions resulting in protracted periods of instability (Allen et al., 2019) and displacements (Chandra et al., 2017). The durability of CBE refers to the long-term viability, *i.e.*, the long-term success and capacity to survive (Igalla et al., 2020 as cited in Kleinhans et al., 2021). In this study, operational durability is based on two (2) dimensions: the internal structural capacity and the external linkages support. The internal capacity of CBE includes its ability to gain surplus that benefits the members, adequacy of competent members (Van Meerkerk et al., 2018); in-place relevant technologies and equipment (Miniano & Concepcion, 2018); and flexibility in adapting to the local Community's needs (Obrenovic et al., 2020). Moreover, external linkages support is another dimension of operational durability, including legitimacy, recognition of the public and government, and the public patronizing the goods and services they offer (Van Meerkerk et al., 2018).

Research Objectives

The primary aim of this research is to determine the factors that explain the sustainability of the CBEs in terms of their social benefits, economic benefits, and operational durability.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is based on the related empirical studies reviewed by the author.

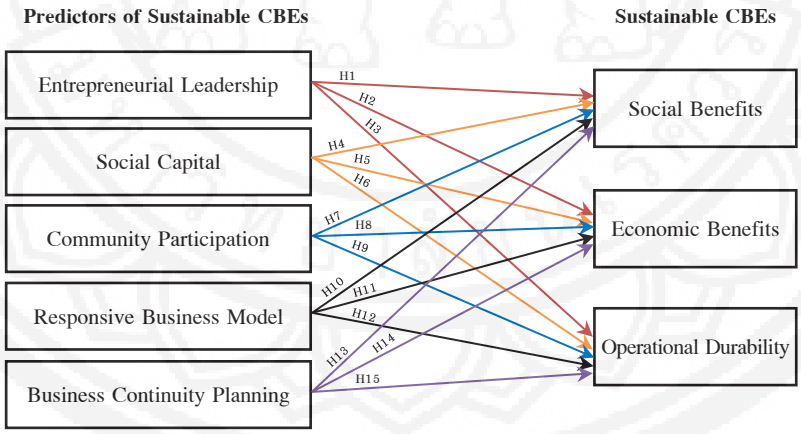

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework.

Research Methodology

Study Location and Population

This study was conducted in the provinces of Maguindanao, North Cotabato, and Sultan Kudarat, geographically located in the southernmost archipelago island in the Philippines. Since the 1960s, historic Rido (family feud), armed conflicts, and political divisions between the Moro Separatist Groups and the government

troops resulted in significant insecurity and population displacements in different parts of the island (Chandra et al., 2017). Over four decades of conflict held back development, especially in Southern Philippines.

We have selected twelve CBEs (four in each province) based on the inclusion criteria: 1) It should be located in conflict-affected areas (municipalities affected by armed conflicts and family feuds as identified by DSWD), 2) officially registered either as a cooperative, people's organization, or association, 3) the community explicitly identified the enterprise as a CBE, and 4) at least five years of operations.

Research Instruments

Questions in the survey questionnaire were derived from the reviewed relevant empirical studies. Five experts in CBEs, Social Enterprise, and community development were invited to validate the questionnaire's content. We used a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Disagree Strongly) to 6 (Agree Strongly) as the rating scale for the closed-ended statements regarding the social and economic benefits. Another 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very Low) to 6 (Very High) was used to measure the CBE's operational durability level. Moreover, we translated the questionnaire into local languages (*Maguindanaon and Filipino*) and administered it face-to-face so we could further explain the content and directly answer their concerns. The survey questionnaire contains questions regarding the profile of the respondents, perceived social and economic benefits, the operational durability of the CBEs, and the factors that contribute to the sustainability of the CBEs.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted on the thirty active members (ten percent of the total sample) of two CBEs to determine the instrument's reliability using the Cronbach Coefficient. All variables have Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of .726 and above. These results ranged between .726 to .901, which indicates that the measurement of the variables is acceptable with a high degree of reliance (Dikko, 2016).

Sampling and Data Collection

This study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. In the quantitative phase, we conducted a cross-sectional survey of 300 active members (N = 907) from the twelve purposefully selected CBEs (four from each province). We asked the respondent-CBEs for the list of their active members and randomly selected our samples. The qualitative phase of the study employed a Phenomenological design. Three FGDs and Eleven KIIs were conducted. Each of the FGDs was participated by eight CBE active members. We purposefully selected the participants of FGD from CBEs, one in each of the three provinces and with different legal statuses (multi-purpose cooperative, livelihood association, and marketing cooperative). FGD participants were selected based on availability and active membership for at least three years.

Moreover, KIIs were conducted with the CBE Leaders (*i.e.*, president, pioneer member) who were knowledgeable about their Enterprise's emergence and status. Each FGD and KIIs lasted for 1 hour and 20 minutes and was conducted on their work premises. All participants in the FGD and KII were asked for informed consent to participate. Data gathering was conducted in February-June 2022.

Data Analysis

Data gathered through the survey was analyzed using descriptive statistics in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Generalized Additive Models (GAMs) were carried out to test the relationship among the variables of interest and determine the extent to which the identified factors predict the sustainability of the CBE. The Generalized Additive Model (GAM) provide a flexible method for identifying nonlinear covariate effects in

exponential family models and other likelihood-based regression models (Hastie & Tibshirani, 1990). The study used the GAM following the formula stated below:

$$f(x) = Y_i = \alpha + f_1(x_{i1}) + f_2(x_{i2}) + \ldots + f_m(x_{im}) + \epsilon_i$$

Where $f_m(x_{im})$ is a non-linear function on x_{im} variables and only assuming that the functions are smooth and additive and the distribution of the error terms are normal, that is $\epsilon_i \sim N(0, \sigma^2)$. Moreover, Qualitative data were transcribed, translated, coded, and thematically analyzed with the aid of Quirkos 2.5.2. (Quirkos, n.d.), a software package for qualitative data analysis.

Ethical Consideration

This study received ethical approval from the Institutional Ethics Review Committee of Mindanao State University, General Santos City, Philippines.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile

A total of 300 respondents participated in the survey, from which 61 percent (183) were male, and 38 percent (115) were female. Findings reveal that the majority of the respondents only attained primary level 26 percent (77), while there was 24 percent (73) finished their secondary education which indicates that the majority of the members had not attended college and thus had low educational attainment. The average number of years of CBE membership is 11.9 years, and the most extended years of membership is 18 years, suggesting that members value their membership as they have stayed in the CBE relatively long.

Predictors of CBE's Economic Benefits

This study aimed to determine the factors that explains the sustainability of Community-based Enterprises in Southern Philippines using economic and social benefits, and the operational durability as domains of interests. As illustrated in Table 1, 49.5% ($R^2 = 0.495$) of the economic benefits of the CBEs are explained by Entrepreneurial Leadership (EL), Community Participation (CP), and Business Continuity Planning (BCP). Thus, the null hypotheses: "Entrepreneurial Leadership, Community Participation, and Business Continuity Planning are not significant predictors of economic benefits of CBEs", were rejected. The result suggests that the highly significant predictor of economic benefits is EL ($p = 0.001$), followed by CP ($p = 0.05$), and BCP ($p = 0.05$). The above findings indicate that the higher the level of EL, CP, and BCP, the more the CBEs become economically beneficial to the members.

However, the analysis fails to reject the null hypothesis: "Social capital and responsive business model are not significant predictors of the economic benefits of CBEs". This result indicates that Social Capital (SC) and Responsive Business Model (RBM) were not found to be a predictor of the economic benefits of the CBEs. This controverts with the previous study of Parwez (2017), suggesting that access to social capital to mainstream connections can determine entrepreneurial success or failure. The emerging evidence shows that social capital, e.g., establishing linkages to government agencies, leads the CBE to acquire more equipment and machines. However, the participants' narratives show that the resources acquired through linkages, though they contribute to the operation of the CBE, also caused greater and higher maintenance operational expenses; thus, the members' economic benefits (e.g., income) were also negatively affected. The responsiveness of CBEs' business model may need to be balanced in providing economic benefits to the members.

Table 1 Generalized Additive Model for CBEs' Economic Benefits

Component	Term	Estimate	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
A. Parametric Coefficients	(Intercept)	89.000	0.446	199.845	***
Component	**Term**	**edf**	**Ref. df**	**F-value**	**p-value**
B. Smooth Terms	**Entrepreneurial Leadership**	**2.364**	**3.036**	**15.455**	***
	Social Capital	1.000	1.000	0.394	
	Community Participation	**7.236**	**7.772**	**2.579**	*
	Responsive Business Model	2.310	2.932	2.339	
	Business Continuity Planning	**8.682**	**8.866**	**2.311**	*

Significant Codes: *P ≤ 0.05; **P ≤ 0.01; ***P ≤ 0.001

Adjusted R-squared: 0.495

Predictors of CBEs' Social Benefits

The factors that explain the social benefits of the CBEs were determined in this study. Table 2 shows that 24.5% (R^2 = 0.245) of the social benefits provided by the CBEs are explained by Entrepreneurial Leadership (EL) and Responsive Business Model (RBM). Thus, the null hypotheses: "Entrepreneurial leadership and responsive business model are not significant predictors of social benefits of CBEs", were rejected. As illustrated in Table 2, RBM is a highly significant predictor (p = 0.01) of the CBE's social benefits, followed by EL (p = 0.05). The above findings suggest that the presence of EL and RBM among the CBEs are significant factors that determine the social benefits of the CBEs in the Southern Philippines. This is in line with the previous findings in the field of CBEs that associate the performance and development of CBEs with the Leadership of a few active persons to make decisions at critical stages in the development of the business (Bailey et al., 2018).

Moreover, SC, CP, and BCM were not significant predictors. Thus, the results fail to reject the null hypothesis: "Social capital, community participation, and business continuity planning are not significant predictors of social benefits of CBEs". This indicates that the presence of SC, CP, and BCP may contribute to the sustainability of CBEs, but they do not determine their social benefits. The above results indicating social capital do not determine the social benefits, reinforce the previous study by Igalla et al. (2020), who observed that CBEs' established social capital has to be utilized to produce an outcome that socially benefits the members. The presence of social capital per se does not guarantee that it can provide social benefits to the members. Social capital can only be beneficial depending on the extent of the ways and means it is used. It was observed that several CBEs conduct meetings to disseminate information, consultation and as a requirement for their compliance with government regulations. It can be deduced from the above findings that some members of the CBE participate passively, which suggests that there is an extent of tokenism in the quality of participation of the CBE members.

Table 2 Generalized Additive Model for CBEs' Social Benefits

Component	Term	Estimate	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
A. Parametric Coefficients	(Intercept)	89.857	0.509	176.467	***
Component	**Term**	**edf**	**Ref. df**	**F-value**	**p-value**
B. Smooth Terms	**Entrepreneurial Leadership**	**1.000**	**1.000**	**5.463**	*
	Social Capital	4.591	5.564	2.072	.
	Community Participation	3.067	3.826	1.136	
	Responsive Business Model	**7.790**	**8.469**	**3.372**	**

Significant Codes: *P ≤ 0.05; **P ≤ 0.01; ***P ≤ 0.001

Adjusted R-squared: 0.245

Predictors of CBEs' Operational Durability

Operational durability is the third dimension of sustainable CBE in this study. Predictors of operational durable CBE were determined. Table 3 shows that 41.7% (R^2 = 0.417) of the operational durability of the CBEs is explained by EL, CP, and RBM. Thus, the null hypotheses: "Entrepreneurial leadership, community participation, and responsive business model are not significant predictors of social benefits of CBEs", were rejected. The results suggest that both EL (p = 0.001) and CP (p = 0.001) are found to be highly significant predictors of the operational durability of CBEs followed by RBM (p = 0.01). Conversely, social capital was not found to be a significant predictor of the operational durability of CBEs. Thus, the results fail to reject the null hypothesis: "Social capital is not a significant predictor of operational durability of CBEs". RBM as a predictor of operational durability is supported by the participants' narratives. One of the CBE members from Maguindanao, a province populated mainly by an ethnic Muslim group Maguindanaon claimed: "Many are looking for halal feeds, so we strive hard to produce them". Furthermore, the commitment of the members to supporting the entrepreneurial activities of their CBEs is highly considered one of the most important forms of participation. As one of the FGD participants conveyed: "The members' participation serves as a lifeblood of the enterprise". These findings reinforce the previous empirical studies that demonstrate the strong relationship and correlation between entrepreneurial Leadership and the performance of an organization (Sandybayev, 2019; Pauceanu et al., 2021; Rahim et al., 2015); opportunity recognition (Bagheri, 2017); and innovative behavior of the members (Newman et al., 2018).

Table 3 Generalized Additive Model for CBEs' Operational Durability

Component	Term	Estimate	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
A. Parametric Coefficients	(Intercept)	89.254	0.403	221.673	***
Component	**Term**	**edf**	**Ref. df**	**F-value**	**p-value**
B. Smooth Terms	**Entrepreneurial Leadership**	**1.428**	**1.745**	**8.766**	***
	Social Capital	1.000	1.000	2.550	
	Community Participation	**7.415**	**8.191**	**3.557**	***
	Responsive Business Model	**1.000**	**1.000**	**10.562**	**

Significant Codes: *P ≤ 0.05; **P ≤ 0.01; ***P ≤ 0.001

Adjusted R-squared: 0.417

Conclusion, Recommendations and Limitations

Conclusion

The formation of Community-based Enterprises (CBEs) is widely lauded as a bottom-up and inclusive poverty-reduction strategy in marginalized and underdeveloped rural communities. This study aimed to determine the factors that explain the sustainability of the CBEs in terms of their social benefits, economic benefits, and operational durability using a sequential explanatory mixed method design. This is a two-phase project wherein the researcher conducted a cross-sectional survey of 300 CBE members in the study's first phase. The results were analyzed and explained in more detail in the second phase through FGDs and KIIs. This study shed light on the factors that explain the sustainability of CBEs in Southern Philippines. Factors such as Entrepreneurial Leadership, Community Participation, and Business Continuity Planning are the determinants of the economic benefits of the CBEs. Entrepreneurial Leadership and a Responsive Business Model determine the social benefits of the CBEs. Moreover, CBEs' operational durability is explained by Entrepreneurial Leadership, Community

Participation, and a Responsive Business Model. This study further illustrates Entrepreneurial Leadership as the predictor of the three dimensions of sustainable CBEs –one that provides social and economic benefits and is operationally durable.

Recommendations

The outcome of this study identified the significant contribution of Entrepreneurial Leadership to the sustainability of Community-based Enterprises. The study also provides insights into the factors contributing to the operational durability, social and economic benefits of the CBEs. In terms of policy, this study has several implications for policymakers in the Philippines and other Low-income Countries (LICs) that implement poverty-reduction programs using CBEs as a strategy. The Philippine Government, through the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA), a government agency in charge of promoting the viability and growth of cooperatives and Community-based Enterprises may consider including Entrepreneurial Leadership as one of the mandatory and regular training for both officers and members of a CBE.

Limitations and Future Study

This study is limited to the three provinces of Southern Philippines. Exploring other geographical parts of the Philippines and other Low-income Countries (LICs) with the highest poverty incidence and where CBEs are used as a poverty reduction strategy could be further explored. This study focused on Entrepreneurial Leadership, Community Participation, Business Continuity Planning, Responsive Business Models and Social Capital. Moreover, other factors, such as the use of digital technology and follow-up support services that may contribute to the sustainability of the CBEs, could be explored in future studies.

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