



Effect of community relationship management, relationship marketing orientation, customer engagement, and brand trust on brand loyalty: The case of a commercial bank in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

Business uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic has brought financial and banking industries under stress. This study examines brand loyalty (BL) in the Thai banking industry by integrating community relationship management (CoRM) (4Cs model), relationship marketing orientation (RMO), customer engagement (CE), and brand trust (BT). It analyzes how a Thai commercial bank used four success factors to create new client acquisition, business efficiency, long-term relationships, and BL. We use quantitative data and structural equation modeling (SEM) to identify variables influencing the BL of 1650 customers of a Thai commercial bank. We found CoRM and RMO's key success factors indirectly affected BL by mediating CE and BT. These results may improve sustained performance effectiveness in the banking industry now and in the future.

1. Introduction

One of the most significant market-driven revolutions in the financial and banking sector is financial technology providing a more varied environment for unique financial services. "Fintech startups, technology developers, governments, financial customers, and traditional financial institutions are elements that contribute to an innovative financial industry, which is facing significant changes in traditional financial services" (Sardianou et al., 2021, p. 1784; Lee and Shin, 2018). Over two billion people in emerging economies have been limited to traditional banking services, and blockchain entrepreneurs are starting to address this issue with new solutions for value exchange (Frizzo-Barker et al., 2020; Larios-Hernández, 2017).

While firms undergoing a digital transformation today can easily access and benefit from technologies such as cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and social media, they also face intense competition. Many organizations use social media as a strategic marketing tool to build customer engagement (CE).

Those involved in effective social media engagement can successfully influence consumer behavior, brand preferences, and purchase decisions. Across product categories, 26% purchases are influenced by

social media recommendations (Bughin, 2015). Social media has the speed and ability to target customers and control costs, driving business change through interactive, two-way communication between customers and firms (Harrigan et al., 2017; Vivek et al., 2012). This new form of digital communication has resulted in enhanced customer association with particular brands as they start experiencing higher attachment, trust, dedication, satisfaction, and loyalty toward these brands (Harrigan et al., 2017).

Social media marketing enhances strong brand loyalty (BL) when brands offer valuable suggestions with appropriate and favored content on various social media platforms. Organizations also encourage communities to create content and increase engagement (Medeiros and Needham, 2009). Thus, social media has revolutionized customer behaviors, awareness, decision making, and brand engagement.

Given this backdrop, the traditional culture prevalent in financial and banking industries is insufficient to initiate development and retain customers (Arguello et al., 2020; Csikósová et al., 2016; Filotto et al., 2021; Komulainen and Saraniemi, 2019; Monferrer et al., 2019; Naeem and Ozuem, 2021; Vives, 2019). To survive and sustain their business, commercial banks must reexamine business plans, gain experience, improve core strengths, and provide innovative business models,

Abbreviations: 4Cs, connectivity, conversations, content creation, and collaboration; AGFI, adjusted goodness of fit index; BT, brand trust; BL, brand loyalty; CE, customer engagement; CFA, confirmatory factor analysis; CFI, comparative fit index; CoRM, community relationship management; GFI, goodness of fit index; RMO, relationship marketing orientation; RMR, root mean square residual; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation; SEM, structural equation modeling; SNS, social networking service; WOM, word-of-mouth.

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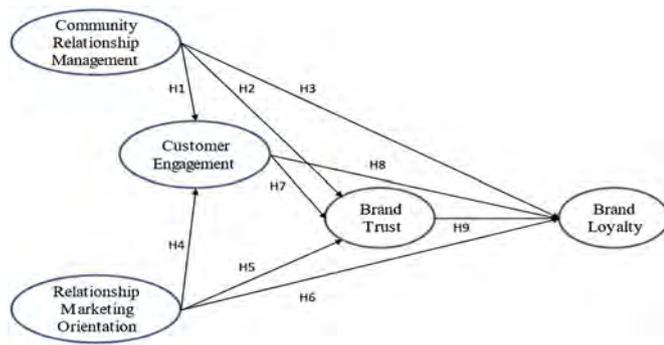


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

Table 1
Sample characteristics.

Characteristic	Number	Percent
Gender		
Men	457	27.7
Women	1193	72.3
Age (years)		
18-29	1390	84.24
30-39	70	4.24
40-49	103	6.24
50-59	83	5.03
60-69	4	0.24
Education level		
Senior high school	101	6.12
High vocational certificate	81	4.91
Bachelor's degree	1432	86.79
Master's degree	27	1.64
Higher than master's degree	9	0.55
Region		
Bangkok	413	25.03
Central	341	20.67
Eastern	490	29.70
Western	22	1.33
Northeast	169	10.24
North	35	2.12
South	180	10.91
Sectors		
Manufacturing sector	102	6.2
Service sector	1378	83.5
Retail and wholesale sectors	110	6.7
Financial and banking sectors	60	3.6
Total	1650	100.0

Table 2
Means, standard deviations, and reliability statistics for the constructs.

Construct	No. of items	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach's alpha
CoRM	7	5.70	0.949	0.917
RMO	6	5.71	0.914	0.929
Customer engagement	5	5.63	0.957	0.922
Brand trust	4	5.68	0.915	0.907
Brand loyalty	5	5.59	0.982	0.932

Note: CoRM = community relationship management; RMO = relationship marketing orientation.

services, products, markets, and technologies with contributions from customers (Arguello et al., 2020; Cho and Chen, 2021; Geebren et al., 2021; Hedley et al., 2006; Karjaluoto et al., 2019; Naseer et al., 2021; Sardianou et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2020), mobile banking use (Baabdullah et al., 2019; Jebarajakirthy and Shankar, 2021; Komulainen and Saraniemi, 2019; Malaquias and Hwang, 2019; Shareef et al., 2018; Zhou et al., 2021), cloud services on customer satisfaction (Li et al., 2021), increasing use of big data and artificial intelligence techniques to

advance customer experience (González-Carrasco et al., 2019; Jang et al., 2021; Königstorfer and Thalmann, 2020; Xu et al., 2020), and including blockchain-based solutions (Ali et al., 2020; Esmaeilian et al., 2020; R and Ravi, 2021; Schuetz and Venkatesh, 2020).

This study aims to develop a concept that increases the effectiveness of Thailand's banking industry. Based on previous literature, we explore modern business approaches such as community relationship management (CoRM) (Ang, 2011) and relationship marketing orientation (RMO) (Sin et al., 2002), and consider CE as an essential element (Vivek et al., 2012, 2014). In a first, this study integrates CoRM (the 4Cs model), RMO, CE, and brand trust (BT), focusing on Thailand's banking industry. Additionally, we aim to find novel ways to increase BL using CoRM, RMO, relationship management, and BT focus. This will enable organizations to respond to clients' desires using a full range of financial services, give professional advice, provide world-class banking and financial consulting services to ensure proper resource allocation, and prioritize long-term business growth, thereby building value for shareholders, employees, and customers, and helping the Thai banking industry realize its potential.

In a digital world with over 4 billion global social networking service (SNS) users (Hootsuite, 2021), the novel concept of CoRM, that unites social media and the online community with customer relationship management (CRM) (Ang, 2011), is gaining traction as a compelling method to improve performance effectiveness and long-term relationships. In this study, we consider the case of a commercial bank in Thailand that used digital tools in the online community with customers through CoRM. In several business-to-customer (B2C) processes like this, digital connections in the online community have revolutionized global business marketing communications. The extant literature does not study the key achievement factors of CoRM and relationship management, or the measurement of and the success of factors that affect BL in the Asian context. Thus, this paper examines the impacts of several variables influencing the BL toward a Thai commercial bank, and performs structural equation modeling (SEM) with the variables influencing BL.

2. Literature review

2.1. Community relationship management

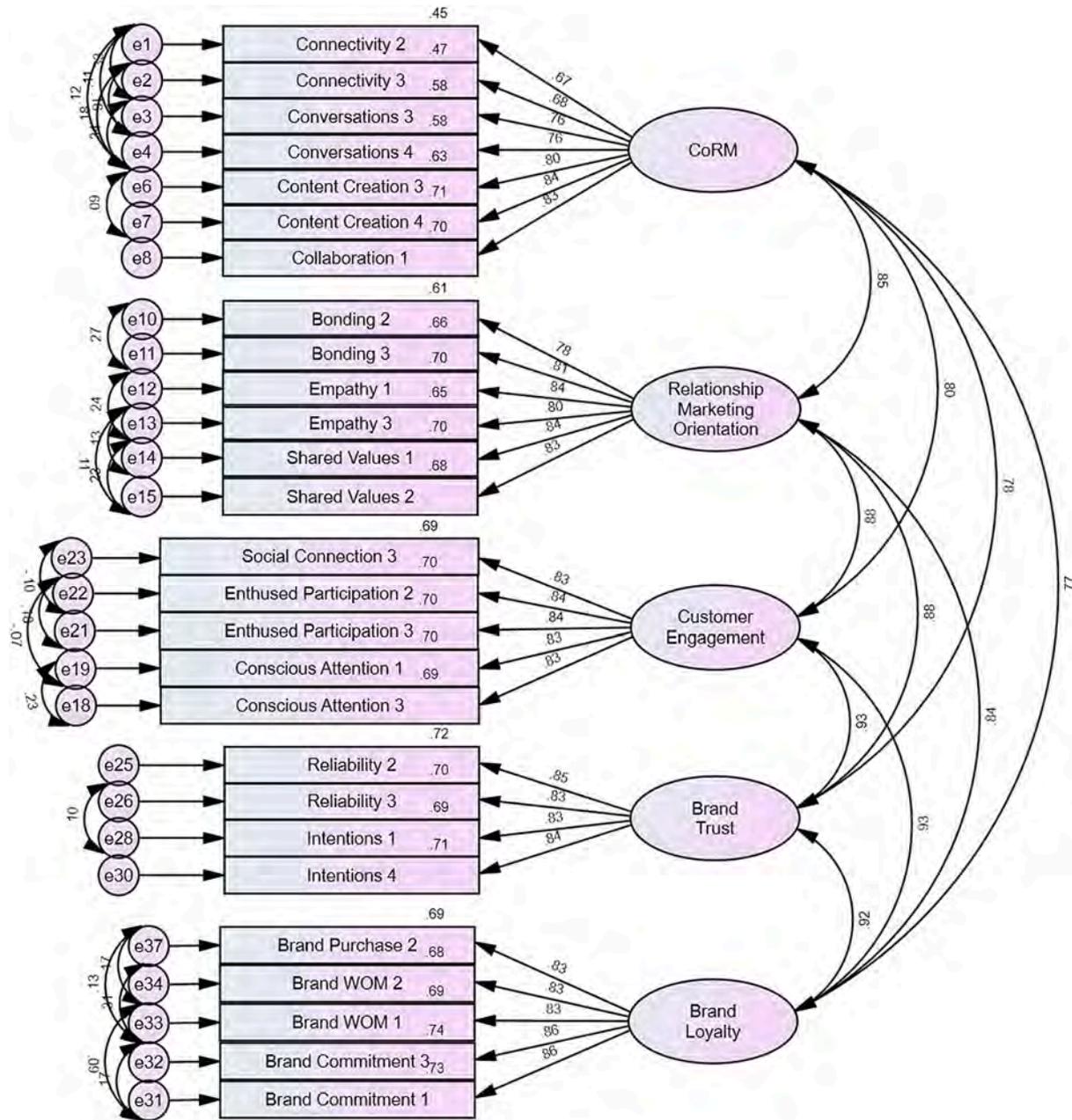
Previous studies (Ang, 2011; Medeiros and Needham, 2009; Wongsuphasawat and Buatama, 2019) define CoRM as a multi-dimensional construct comprising the 4Cs, namely, connectivity, conversations, content creation, and collaboration. Organizations seeking to manage a community should use the 4Cs model as it helps understand how social media forms relationships among users (Ang, 2011).

2.1.1. Connectivity

Many platforms allow users to connect with each other and with businesses easily (Ang, 2011). Successful social networking growth depends on how well organizations attract and create a user community. Businesses can advertise, create chatbots, and market through Facebook Pages and Messenger; Facebook's outstanding structures provide businesses innovative ways to engage buyers and connect with customers.

2.1.2. Conversations

Through features such as Facebook Live and instant news feeds, Facebook has ensured that users are kept up-to-date with the latest information on their "walls" (Ang, 2011). The speed and value of replies to user posts are key to ensuring conversation (Casaló et al., 2008). Organizations can determine reactions and attitudes to campaign messages and brands from social media conversations. Continuous social media monitoring can signal customer preferences for marketing and enable faster company responses, especially during crises (Wongsuphasawat and Buatama, 2019).



Chi-square = 782.142 ,df = 292, CMIN/DF =2.679,
 GFI = .966, CFI =.988, NFI = .981, RMR =.013, RMSEA = .032

Fig. 2. Confirmatory factor analysis of community relationship management, relationship marketing orientation, customer engagement, brand trust, and brand loyalty. Note: WOM = word of mouth; GFI = goodness-of-fit index; CFI = comparative fit index; NFI = normed fit index; RMR = root mean square residual; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

2.1.3. Content creation

Ahmad et al. (2019, p. 86) and Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 61) defined social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.” Users generate content on platforms such as blogs, Facebook pages, and YouTube channels with photos, community group posts, and videos, allowing good visibility and reach. “The creators of videos are often motivated by fame, I seek fame. I want the world to see my video” (Ang, 2011, p. 34; Wongsuphasawat and Buatama, 2019, p. 68).

2.1.4. Collaboration

Communication technologies and advanced resources empowering online collaboration improve group activity, particularly when groups share data and make decisions based on identified information (Fedorowicz et al., 2008). New collaboration tools facilitate innovations that decrease time to market, develop new business models, and ensure new product development. By allowing multiple users to contribute cooperatively, collaborations such as Wikipedia (Ang, 2011) improve task processes and their results by enhancing team capability and engagement in content creation.

Table 3
Results of confirmatory factor analysis for the measurement model.

Construct	Item	Standardized regression weights	Squared multiple correlations (R ²)
CoRM	Connectivity 2	0.67	0.45
	Connectivity 3	0.68	0.47
	Conversations 3	0.76	0.58
	Conversations 4	0.76	0.58
	Content creation 3	0.80	0.63
	Content creation 4	0.84	0.71
RMO	Collaboration 1	0.83	0.70
	Bonding 2	0.78	0.61
	Bonding 3	0.81	0.66
	Empathy 1	0.84	0.70
	Empathy 3	0.80	0.65
	Shared values 1	0.84	0.70
Customer engagement	Shared values 2	0.83	0.68
	Conscious attention 1	0.83	0.70
	Conscious attention 3	0.83	0.69
	Enthusied participation 2	0.84	0.70
	Enthusied participation 3	0.84	0.70
	Social connection 3	0.83	0.69
Brand trust	Reliability 2	0.85	0.72
	Reliability 3	0.83	0.70
	Intentions 1	0.83	0.69
	Intentions 4	0.84	0.71
Brand loyalty	Brand commitment 1	0.86	0.73
	Brand commitment 3	0.86	0.74
	Brand WOM 1	0.83	0.69
	Brand WOM 2	0.83	0.68
	Brand purchase 2	0.83	0.69

Note: CoRM = community relationship management; RMO = relationship marketing orientation; WOM = word of mouth.

2.1.5. Online communities

Online brand communities create consumer–firm relationships that increase BL (Anaya-Sánchez et al., 2020). Thus, firms benefit from CoRM by using business research, building BL, fostering opinions and support, generating advertisements, developing new products, and reducing operation costs (Ang, 2011; Medeiros and Needham, 2009). The 4Cs model would facilitate an understanding of how social media forms high-value relationships among users at a commercial Thai bank wishing to create a successful online community. Real-time solutions may be offered by customer service teams and chatbots via Facebook Pages, Messenger, and LINE official account (24 h), while new content is streamed “live” on their YouTube channel. Based on Ang (2011), Wongsuphasawat and Buatama (2019), and the 4Cs, we propose the following hypotheses:

- H1. CoRM impacts CE positively.
- H2. CoRM impacts BT positively.
- H3. CoRM impacts BL positively.

2.2. Relationship marketing orientation

RMO “is a multi-dimensional construct consisting of six components: trust, bonding, communication, shared value, empathy, and reciprocity” (Kucukkancabas et al., 2009, p. 442; Sin et al., 2002, p. 658; Wongsansukcharoen et al., 2015, p. 744).

Agustin and Singh (2005, p. 97) explain “trust as a consumer’s confident beliefs that he or she can rely on the seller to deliver promised services.” Bonding involves the growth of customers’ BL (Chattananon

and Trimetsoontorn, 2009; Sharifi and Esfidani, 2014). Communication resolves disputes, aligns goals, and creates new opportunities (Palmatier et al., 2006).

Theron and Terblanche (2010, p. 390) consider shared value as “the extent to which partners have beliefs in common about what behaviors, goals and policies are important or unimportant, appropriate or inappropriate, and right or wrong.” Further, in commerce, empathy involves putting customers first, solving problems, and understanding their desires (Kucukkancabas et al., 2009). Reciprocity in relationship marketing “causes either party to provide favors or make allowances for the other in return for similar favors or allowances to be received at a later date” (Sin et al., 2002, p. 661). In banking, RMO is relevant to value proposition, as it builds customer loyalty and commitment (Ganaie and Bhat, 2020; Olotu et al., 2011; Yoganathan et al., 2015). Organizations use these fundamentals to attract customers and increase BL (Amoako, 2019). Accordingly, we hypothesize:

- H4. RMO impacts CE positively.
- H5. RMO impacts BT positively.
- H6. RMO impacts BL positively.

2.3. Customer engagement

Van Doorn et al. (2010, p. 253) define CE “as the customers’ behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers.” Brand engagement is the level of cognitive (knowledge), emotional (passion), and behavioral (activation) investment in particular brand connections (Hollebeek, 2011). Brodie et al. (2011) and Kosiba et al. (2018) define CE as consumers’ emotional, behavioral, and/or cognitive reactions to the company or brand.

Appreciated for its predictive capabilities in retention and loyalty (Bowden, 2009; Hollebeek, 2012), CE has increased with social media use, creating customer relationships (Hudson and Thal, 2013). While Pansari and Kumar (2017, p. 295) define the CE framework “as the mechanics of a customer’s value addition to the firm, either through direct or/and indirect contribution,” it is an amalgam of emotional and rational promises created through experiences with a brand (Hollebeek and Chen, 2014; Monferrer et al., 2019; Pansari and Kumar, 2017).

CE is the manifestation of an individual’s involvement in organizational offerings (Vivek et al., 2012). Empirical studies show significant relations between CE and customer loyalty (Bowden, 2009; Monferrer et al., 2019; van Doorn et al., 2010). Leckie et al. (2016) and Kosiba et al. (2018) find that CE is positively connected with BL. Organizations create relations with clients by connecting individuals with brands (Vivek et al., 2012), creating BL.

Vivek et al. (2012, p. 127) offer a CE model “in which the participation and involvement of current or potential customers serve as antecedents of CE, while value, trust, affective commitment, word of mouth, loyalty, and brand community involvement are potential consequences.” Following Vivek et al. (2014), we consider three components of CE, namely conscious attention, enthused participation, and social connection. Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H7. CE positively impacts BT.
- H8. CE positively impacts BL.

2.4. Brand trust

“Brand trust is the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function” (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001, p. 82; Luk and Yip, 2008, p. 453). Customers’ BT, arising from brand communication, satisfaction, and value, is the belief that the brand is dependable and honest, and will fulfill its business promises (Füller et al., 2008; Hur et al., 2011).

BT mediates the evolution of the brand community’s relationships

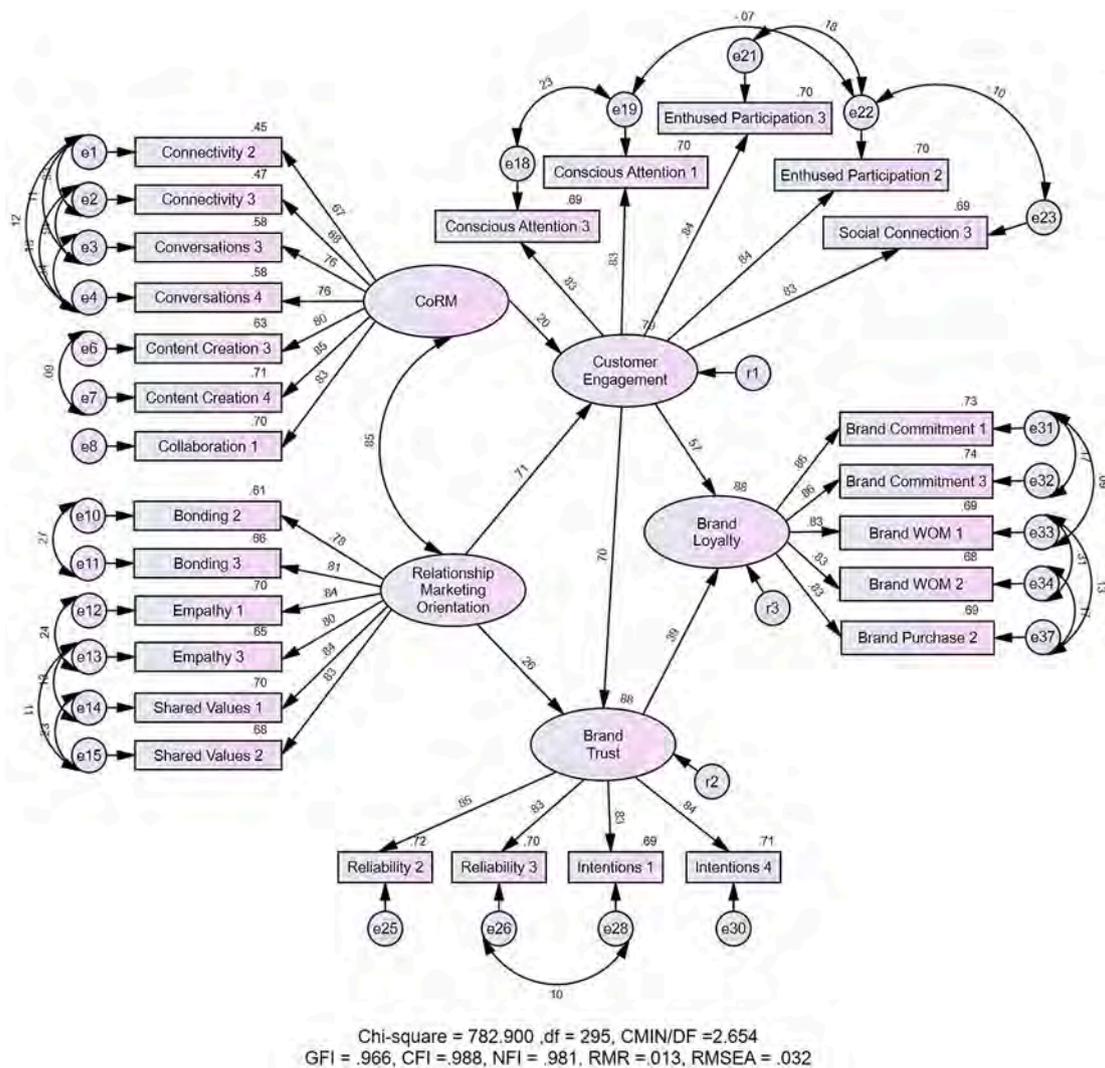


Fig. 3. Results of structural equation modeling of the community relationship management, relationship marketing orientation, customer engagement, brand trust, and brand loyalty. Note: WOM = word of mouth; GFI = goodness-of-fit index; CFI = comparative fit index; NFI = normed fit index; RMR = root mean square residual; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

into BL (Laroche et al., 2013). There is a significant positive relationship between BT and BL. (Adam et al., 2018; Chinomona, 2016; Huang, 2017). BL is perceived as behavioral intention or actual brand purchase behavior or both (Matzler et al., 2008). Therefore, BT is a significant predictor of BL (Srivastava et al., 2015).

Previous studies hypothesize that BT is a multi-dimensional construct comprising brand reliability and brand intention (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003; Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2005; Luk and Yip, 2008). Brand reliability is the capability and willingness of a business to fulfill promises, and incorporates business ability, integrity, and performance predictability (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003). “Consumers tend to repurchase brands they trust because they cognitively and affectively value the brand’s reliability” (Anaya-Sánchez et al., 2020, p. 179). Brand intention places customer attention and safety first when unpredictable problems arise (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán, 2005; Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003; Luk and Yip, 2008), integrating trustworthiness, kindness, and concern for customers’ needs (Munuera-Aleman et al., 2003).

Measures constituting brand reliability and intention expose both the emotive and perceptive features of client trust. Online community trust in brands creates a sense of safety, inspiring beneficial behavior and repurchase intention toward the brand (Anaya-Sánchez et al., 2020, p. 179). Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2005) demonstrate BT’s

effect on purchasing intention and BL. BT is a key driver of BL, as hypothesized below:

H9. BT impacts BL positively.

2.5. Brand loyalty

Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 23) define BL as “commitment to a certain brand arising from certain positive attitudes.” A company’s market share will grow as loyal consumers purchase repeatedly (Horppu et al., 2008). BL refers to stakeholder loyalty toward the organization and its brand (Juntunen et al., 2011). Laroche et al. (2013, p. 78) suggest that “the enhanced relationships in the customer centric model of brand community should increase BT, which has a positive effect on brand loyalty.” Kosiba et al. (2018, p. 768) define BL as the “continuous purchase and cross-purchase of a particular brand and brand referral.”

BL is a promise to repurchase favored goods and services of a brand consistently, despite situational effects and advertising distractions that encourage brand switching (Oliver, 1999). It includes affective commitment, behavioral purchase loyalty, and recommendations to others (Johnson et al., 2006). We theoretically define BL as a behavioral response to a preferred product or service with long-term repurchase intentions, favoring and recommending the products and services of

Table 4
Regression weights (Group 1: default model).

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Customer engagement	<←	RMO	0.797	0.045	17.905	***
Customer engagement	<←	CoRM	0.214	0.039	5.473	***
Brand trust	<←	RMO	0.269	0.041	6.614	***
Brand trust	<←	Customer engagement	0.645	0.039	16.610	***
Brand loyalty	<←	Brand trust	0.427	0.063	6.733	***
Brand loyalty	<←	Customer engagement	0.577	0.059	9.762	***
Connectivity_2	<←	CoRM	0.932	0.031	29.663	***
Connectivity_3	<←	CoRM	0.865	0.029	30.284	***
Conversations_3	<←	CoRM	0.951	0.027	35.191	***
Conversations_4	<←	CoRM	0.936	0.027	35.112	***
Content creation_3	<←	CoRM	0.966	0.026	37.206	***
Content creation_4	<←	CoRM	1.000	0.025	40.800	***
Collaboration_1	<←	CoRM	1.000			
Bonding_2	<←	RMO	1.007	0.028	36.582	***
Bonding_3	<←	RMO	1.054	0.027	38.563	***
Empathy_1	<←	RMO	1.045	0.026	40.673	***
Empathy_3	<←	RMO	0.990	0.025	40.364	***
Shared values_1	<←	RMO	1.014	0.022	46.558	***
Shared values_2	<←	RMO	1.000			
Enthused participation_3	<←	Customer engagement	1.000			
Conscious attention_3	<←	Customer engagement	0.960	0.023	41.640	***
Conscious attention_1	<←	Customer engagement	0.976	0.023	41.638	***
Enthused participation_2	<←	Customer engagement	0.979	0.021	46.378	***
Social connection_3	<←	Customer engagement	0.961	0.023	41.345	***
Reliability_3	<←	Brand trust	1.041	0.024	43.694	***
Intentions_4	<←	Brand trust	0.996	0.024	41.790	***
Intentions_1	<←	Brand trust	1.000			
Reliability_2	<←	Brand trust	1.031	0.024	42.235	***
Brand commitment_1	<←	Brand loyalty	0.992	0.024	41.622	***
Brand commitment_3	<←	Brand loyalty	1.005	0.024	42.115	***
Brand WOM_1	<←	Brand loyalty	1.006	0.021	48.231	***
Brand WOM_2	<←	Brand loyalty	1.000			
Brand purchase_2	<←	Brand loyalty	0.965	0.022	44.517	***

Note: CoRM = community relationship management; RMO = relationship marketing orientation; WOM = word of mouth.

Estimate = 1.000 because regression weight is fixed as 1.

***p < 0.001.

such brand.

Here, the BL toward a commercial Thai bank is measured as an endogenous latent variable with three observed variables, namely brand commitment, word of mouth (WOM), and brand purchase (Jahn and Kunz, 2012; Johnson et al., 2006; Wongsuphasawat and Buatama, 2019).

3. Research method

3.1. Survey design

Fig. 1 presents the variables in the theoretical model based on previous research. We modified 16 questionnaire items developed by Bruhn et al. (2012), Jahn and Kunz (2012), Harvard Business Review Analytic Services (2010), and Wongsuphasawat and Buatama (2019) to measure CoRM and utilized 18 questionnaire items proposed by Chattananon and Trimetsoontorn (2009), Sin et al. (2002, 2005), and Wongsansukcharoen et al. (2015) to measure RMO. The CE scale was developed using 10 questionnaire items developed by Vivek et al. (2014). For BT, we

Table 5
Standardized regression weights (Group 1: default model).

Variable		Estimate	
Customer engagement	<←	RMO	0.713
Customer engagement	<←	CoRM	0.199
Brand trust	<←	RMO	0.261
Brand trust	<←	Customer engagement	0.700
Brand loyalty	<←	Brand trust	0.388
Brand loyalty	<←	Customer engagement	0.568
Conversations_3	<←	CoRM	0.762
Conversations_4	<←	CoRM	0.761
Content creation_4	<←	CoRM	0.845
Bonding_2	<←	RMO	0.782
Bonding_3	<←	RMO	0.811
Empathy_1	<←	RMO	0.839
Empathy_3	<←	RMO	0.805
Shared values_1	<←	RMO	0.836
Enthused participation_3	<←	Customer engagement	0.836
Conscious attention_3	<←	Customer engagement	0.833
Conscious attention_1	<←	Customer engagement	0.834
Enthused participation_2	<←	Customer engagement	0.838
Social connection_3	<←	Customer engagement	0.829
Reliability_3	<←	Brand trust	0.835
Intentions_4	<←	Brand trust	0.842
Intentions_1	<←	Brand trust	0.831
Brand WOM_1	<←	Brand loyalty	0.831
Brand WOM_2	<←	Brand loyalty	0.825
Reliability_2	<←	Brand trust	0.848
Shared values_2	<←	RMO	0.827
Collaboration_1	<←	CoRM	0.834
Content creation_3	<←	CoRM	0.796
Connectivity_3	<←	CoRM	0.684
Connectivity_2	<←	CoRM	0.673
Brand commitment_1	<←	Brand loyalty	0.857
Brand commitment_3	<←	Brand loyalty	0.862
Brand purchase_2	<←	Brand loyalty	0.832

Note: CoRM = community relationship management; RMO = relationship marketing orientation; WOM = word of mouth.

Table 6
Squared multiple correlations (Group 1: default model).

Variable	Estimate
Customer engagement	0.789
Brand trust	0.881
Brand loyalty	0.884
Social connection_3	0.687
Brand purchase_2	0.692
Brand WOM_2	0.681
Brand WOM_1	0.690
Brand commitment_3	0.743
Brand commitment_1	0.734
Intentions_4	0.710
Intentions_1	0.691
Reliability_2	0.719
Reliability_3	0.696
Enthused participation_2	0.703
Enthused participation_3	0.699
Conscious attention_1	0.696
Conscious attention_3	0.693
Shared values_1	0.699
Shared values_2	0.684
Empathy_1	0.704
Empathy_3	0.648
Bonding_2	0.612
Bonding_3	0.657
Collaboration_1	0.696
Content creation_3	0.634
Content creation_4	0.714
Conversations_3	0.581
Conversations_4	0.579
Connectivity_2	0.453
Connectivity_3	0.467

Note: WOM = word of mouth.

Table 7
Hypotheses results for the structural model.

Hypothesis				Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p-value	Result
H1	CoRM	→	CE	0.213	0.040	5.300	***	Supported
H2	CoRM	→	BT	-0.012	0.032	-0.361	0.718	Not supported
H3	CoRM	→	BL	0.020	0.034	0.580	0.562	Not supported
H4	RMO	→	CE	0.797	0.045	17.561	***	Supported
H5	RMO	→	BT	0.279	0.047	5.893	***	Supported
H6	RMO	→	BL	0.008	0.052	0.147	0.883	Not supported
H7	CE	→	BT	0.647	0.039	16.545	***	Supported
H8	CE	→	BL	0.560	0.064	8.818	***	Supported
H9	BT	→	BL	0.421	0.066	6.377	***	Supported

Note: CoRM = community relationship management; RMO = relationship marketing orientation; CE = customer engagement; BT = brand trust; BL = brand loyalty; C.R. = critical ratio; S.E. = standard error.
***p < 0.001.

Table 8
Structural model results.

	Direct effects	Indirect effects	Total effects
CoRM → CE	0.199	-	0.199
CoRM → CE → BT	-	0.139	0.139
CoRM → CE → BL	-	0.113	0.113
CoRM → CE → BT → BL	-	0.054	0.054
CoRM → CE → BL + CoRM → CE → BT → BL	-	0.167*	0.167
RMO → CE	0.713	-	0.713
RMO → BT	0.261	-	0.261
RMO → CE → BT	-	0.499	0.499
RMO → BT (Direct effect) + RMO → CE → BT (Indirect effect)	0.261	0.499	0.760
RMO → CE → BL	-	0.405	0.405
RMO → BT → BL	-	0.101	0.101
RMO → CE → BT → BL	-	0.194	0.194
RMO → CE → BL + RMO → BT → BL + RMO → CE → BT → BL	-	0.70*	0.70
CE → BL	0.568	-	0.568
CE → BT	0.70	-	0.70
CE → BT → BL	-	0.272	0.272
BT → BL	0.388	-	0.388

Note: CoRM = community relationship management; RMO = relationship marketing orientation; CE = customer engagement; BT = brand trust; BL = brand loyalty.
The total effect is the sum of the direct effect and total indirect effect of X on Y (Kline, 2016, p. 134; 233).
* indicates the sum of the indirect effect.
***p < 0.001.

adopted 8 questionnaire items developed by Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2005), Horppu et al. (2008), Hur et al. (2011), Luk and Yip (2008), and Matzler et al. (2008). We further derived 9 questionnaire items from Hur et al. (2011), Jahn and Kunz (2012), and Laroche et al. (2013) for BL. Using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), these 61 items were checked to ensure model fit, resulting in 27 measurement items.

3.2. Data collection

The study applied quantitative research, including a two-part survey on overall participant data and the variables CoRM, RMO, CE, BT, and BL. In December 2020, we used purposive sampling to collect data from 1650 bank customers during bank customer group meetings in large private networks (out of 2000 distributed questionnaires; response rate: 82.5%) in Thailand.

There were 457 (27.7%) and 1193 (72.3%) male and female respondents, respectively. All survey items were attitudinal questions answered on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree; see Table 1).

3.3. Reliability and validity

The measurement model was estimated for reliability and discriminant validity using the accepted guidelines (Table 2). First, we computed Cronbach’s alphas for all variables. Table 2 presents Cronbach’s alphas for the final variables. The reliability analysis measure ranged from 0.907 to 0.932, “which is greater than 0.7, the threshold as suggested by Nunnally (1978)” (Sin et al., 2002, p. 664).

According to Hair et al. (1998, 2010), CMIN/df is a commonly used model fit measure. CMIN/df ratios between 3 and 1 indicate an acceptable model fit while comparative fit index values near 1 indicate a good model fit (Bentler, 1990). The adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) and goodness-of-fit index (GFI) are at least 0.90; AGFI and GFI values near 1 indicate the best model fit (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1984). The root mean square residual (RMR) is less than 0.05; an RMR close to 0 indicates perfect model fit. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is less than 0.05; RMSEA close to 0 indicates perfect model fit (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). Therefore, all variables measuring latent constructs in this conceptual framework demonstrated convergent validity (Fig. 2).

3.4. Measurement and structural models

This research model used SPSS and AMOS software version 21 for the CFA and SEM. Table 3 displays each item’s standardized regression weights and squared multiple correlations (R²). Fig. 2 displays the exceptional CFA outcomes, well above the acceptable thresholds recommended by Bentler (1990), Browne and Cudeck (1993), Hair et al. (1998, 2010), Jöreskog and Sörbom (1984), and Wheaton et al. (1977).

4. Results

We verified the hypotheses using SEM, which conforms to the empirical data in the theoretical model. The research model’s estimation results, presented in Fig. 3 and Tables 4–8, demonstrate that CoRM only has an indirect effect on BL through the conciliation of CE and BT (p < 0.001). Additionally, RMO only affects BL indirectly because of the mediation of CE and BT (p < 0.001). The model explains 88.4% of BL variation. This study estimated 85% correlation between CoRM and RMO, explaining 79% of CE variation (p < 0.001; Fig. 3 and Tables 4–6).

We found that CoRM (exogenous latent variable), comprising 4Cs, is helpful in recognizing factors affecting BL and is a probable driver of business growth and long-term customer relations. The SEM confirmed that the 4Cs have significant (p < 0.001) indirect effects on BL. In business, CoRM is essential as it facilitates new client acquisition. The RMO (exogenous latent variable) comprises six observed variables. The SEM confirmed that bonding, empathy, and shared value were significantly associated with CE and BT (p < 0.001). However, communication, reciprocity, and trust were not significantly associated with BL. The analysis showed that RMO indirectly affected BL through the mediation

of CE and BT ($p < 0.001$). As a mediator variable, CE comprises three observed variables. The SEM confirmed that conscious attention, enthused participation, and social connection were significantly associated with BT and BL ($p < 0.001$). CE affected BL directly ($p < 0.001$) and indirectly through BT ($p < 0.001$). BT, as a mediator variable, includes two observed variables. The SEM confirmed that brand reliability and brand intentions were significantly linked with BL ($p < 0.001$). Finally, BL (endogenous latent variable) includes three observed variables. The SEM confirmed that brand commitment, WOM, and purchase were significantly associated with BL ($p < 0.001$; Fig. 3 and Tables 4–6). Table 7 presents a summary of the hypotheses results for the structural model.

5. Discussion

This study contributes to the existing literature by enhancing our knowledge regarding the impacts of CoRM, RMO, CE, and BT on BL. The result investigating the effects of CoRM, RMO, CE, and BT on BL indicated that CoRM and RMO (bonding, empathy, and shared values) indirectly influenced BL through the mediation of CE and BT ($p < 0.001$). Table 8 presents the SEM results.

In the Southeast Asian environment, this research confirms several cases of banks taking advantage of the CoRM practice. Banks can take benefit from such practices by using marketing research on online banking communities, intelligent publicity in each community group, nourishing opinion leaders or contributors, creating energetic ads for target clients, developing innovative outputs, lowering the cost-to-serve, and boosting BL for the banks. Accordingly, our results that show the effect of CoRM on BL are consistent with Ang (2011) and Wongsuphasawat and Buatama (2019).

The banking industry in Thailand is full of competition, and this research paper seeks to examine how RMO changes with BL and how a bank can further create longstanding relationships and value for its clients. With respect to the RMO-BL connection, the findings show that the bank's degree of RMO is positively correlated with BL. This research further confirms that RMO leads to BL, following the work of Amoako (2019). This is an addition to theory. The examination also found that those three dimensions of RMO are significantly correlated to BL. Accordingly, our results show that the effect of RMO only affects BL indirectly because of the mediation of CE and BT. The implication is that banks in Thailand can develop their performance and BL through the adoption of RMO practice.

In CE on BL, we found support for our conceptual model through data from bank customers. The results of this examination are in line with the existing research, wherein banks can gain the BL of clients by creating a CE environment. That is, banks can encourage clients to engage with their various capabilities to fill the needs and expectations of the clients through community management. In particular, the CE environment makes clients excited about the bank (brand) and empowers them to feel confident and energetic in associating with the brand. Additionally, the CE environment makes clients pay more attention to the marketing communications of the banks and perform attempts to do business with the bank through online banking communities. Accordingly, our results that show the effect of CE on BL are consistent with Brodie et al. (2013), Hollebeek (2011), Kosiba et al. (2018), Leckie et al. (2016), and Vivek et al. (2012).

In BT on BL, the outcomes of this examination are in line with the existing research. Banks can achieve the BL of clients by developing a BT environment. Banks must fulfill their promise to clients, and the clients need to feel a sense of justice in the community banking environment. Furthermore, the wishes and welfare of the clients should be of prime concern to the banks. Accordingly, our results that show the effect of BT on BL follow Adam et al. (2018), Chinomona (2016), Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Alemán (2005), Delgado-Ballester et al. (2003), Huang (2017), Laroche et al. (2013), and Punniyamoorthy and Raj (2007).

Finally, these results help develop strategies for CoRM, social

networks, and relationship marketing by concentrating on factors that positively affect CE, BT, and BL. Integrating branding and RMO strategies in the financial and banking industries would enhance CE and BL. Understanding the factors that affect BL would facilitate proper resource allocation and long-term business growth.

6. Implications

6.1. Theoretical implications

This study offers several theoretical contributions. The impact of CoRM, RMO, CE, and BT on BL, within a commercial bank context, has not been decidedly explored. First, this study integrates CoRM (the 4Cs model), RMO, CE, and BT, focusing on Thailand's banking industry. Our study contributes to deepening the understanding of how CoRM, RMO, CE, and BT impact BL in general and in the banking context. We show that the positive effect of the four factors on BL occurs through an increased integration of CoRM, RMO, CE, and BT with a brand.

In terms of theoretical contributions, our results strengthen the idea that four success factors affect BL. We found novel ways to increase BL using CoRM, RMO, CE, and BT focus. Specifically, our study contributes to the integration of CoRM, RMO, CE, and BT research by showing that the SEM model enhances BL in the banking context. This will enable commercial banks to respond to customers' needs using a full range of financial services through online CoRM, give professional instructions, and provide world-class banking and financial consulting services to ensure proper resource allocation with the help of modern technology, building unique value for shareholders, employees, and customers, and helping the Thai banking industry keep its competitive advantage in the ASEAN economic community.

6.2. Managerial implications

In the digital world, with 55 million active social media users in Thailand (78.7% of the total population) (Hootsuite, 2021), the novel concept of CoRM, that unites social media and the online community with CRM (Ang, 2011), is gaining traction as an interesting practice to advance performance effectiveness and long-term relationships. Hence, this research has managerial implications for managing directors, marketing managers, marketing officers, and customer service officers in commercial banks and financial service industries.

In this study, we found the practice of developing banking performance and BL using digital tools in the online community of customers through CoRM (the 4Cs model), RMO, CE, and BT. In several business-to-customer (B2C) processes like this, digital connections in the online community have revolutionized global business marketing communications. To live and sustain their professional services, commercial banks must provide innovative business models, revise business plans, create innovative financial products, marketing solutions, services, and processes, provide superior customer experience, manage relationships in a modern manner with contributions from customers, use mobile banking and cloud services to delight customers, and increase the use of big data and artificial intelligence techniques to advance customer experience, including blockchain-based solutions in the online community of Thai commercial banks.

6.3. Limitations and further research

The sole use of quantitative data is a limitation of the study. Additional limitations relate to the industry (banking), region (Thailand), and sample size (females, aged 18–29, and the service sector proportion). Thus, the results may not be applicable to other industries and countries. Future studies should utilize qualitative data to examine associations among CoRM, RMO, CE, BT, and BL and extend their exploration to dissimilar industries and other countries, with a more balanced sample and model.

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