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## **The flagship is here! Multimodal technical storytelling in localised corporate websites**

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### **ABSTRACT**

With the latest technological advances and the digital transformation in all areas of business and life, technical content has transformed into a multisemiotic and multimodal form of communication. This contribution focuses on multimodal metaphorical realisations of technical content integrated in digital storytelling in internationalised corporate websites and their localised versions. Through the analysis of three case studies it aims to describe how content is localised to the countries or regions in which a company's products or services are marketed, how content localisation supports their respective languages and whether it is designed according to the target culture's conventions and constraints. Concentrating on German and Greek, the analysis reveals that technical content is merged with marketing content and that similar values are projected in the two locales. However, in line with Hall's ranking of German as a low-context and Greek as a high-context culture the German version demonstrates more explicitness. Moreover, in all three cases the websites are culturally customised through the use of different narratives along with cultural constraints. The findings can be useful both for the training of localisers and technical communicators as well as for companies interested in localising their technical content.

### **KEYWORDS**

Technical communication, narrative strategy, digital storytelling, metaphor, corporate website, website localisation, multimodality, hypermodality, German, Greek.

## **1. Introduction**

Companies today use content marketing to turn users into customers by "repurposing" their content into consumable content, that is:

- content that resonates with target audiences and search engines
- content that customers and prospects are looking for and that helps them meet their goals and needs and solve their problems (Johnson 2016).

For example, users may be looking for information, inspiration, help, engagement, or entertainment or a combination thereof. Content marketing, including the marketing of technical content, creates value in that it builds trust, strengthens brands and offers high-quality content that helps people solve problems (Lieb 2012: 1-2). This sets it apart from traditional marketing: the idea is "not to interrupt, but to inform" (Pukulis 2017: 13).

For content to be optimally consumable, it should be *locally* consumable, that is adapted and customised to the needs of the local language

community (Wermuth and Meex 2017: 41-42). Indeed, more and more companies offer multilingual websites and build a multilingual presence on blogs, social media, and search engine optimisation (SEO). However, supporting different languages does not suffice to make you succeed globally. For a company to enter global markets and to onboard new prospects and customers, “its web presence must first be internationalized, localized, and optimized for multilingual search engine optimization”, i.e. globalised (Lionbridge 2015: 4).

To understand and accommodate for the needs, and problems of (local) communities, companies are advised to build relationships with their users. Corporate websites are powerful marketing tools with which companies inform visitors about the company history, activities, purpose, core values, and about the products and services they offer. They also allow companies to interact with (prospective) customers and to build a loyal community around their brand.

In a holistic approach to marketing, technical content is no longer isolated from the company’s marketing strategy but has become integrated into it. In fact, technical communication *is* content marketing. It is specifically designed to inform and help people and turn their pre-purchase and post-purchase experiences with the brand into a marketing opportunity (Pukulis 2017: 14). If marketing communication and technical communication join forces, they can deliver a seamless and unified digital content experience for users across a variety of modalities and channels. Unifying the customer journey requires empathy with the user, a good story built up of diverse experiences and sequenced narrative acts and a proper localisation, which takes into account the demands of local communities.

Organisations increasingly resort to many different modalities and channels to deliver their content in ways that are aligned with the needs and expectations of increasingly global audiences. The brand’s storytelling can then take various forms and can become intertwined, through different traversals, with the product’s technical information. Thus, whereas technical content was formerly considered mainly informative and instructive, new realities reveal that technical content can be both operative and expressive, “packed with positive and affective emotions” (Zeisberg 2018), in line with the marketing story of the brand.

Given this reality, the following research questions arise:

- How are narrative strategies developed across different language versions of a corporate website? (RQ1)
- How are multimodal metaphors integrated into the narrative strategies employed in these multilingual corporate websites? (RQ2)

This contribution focuses on multimodal technical content and digital storytelling in the internationalised version and two localised (German and Greek) website versions of two companies. More specifically, our aim is to examine, comparatively and contrastively, the multisemiotic narratives that occur on these websites, which are targeted at different cultural audiences. Emphasis is placed on multimodal rhetorical tropes such as multimodal metaphors and the way they contribute to a corporate website's narrative. Multimodal metaphors' culture-specificity is expected to reveal discrepancies in different language versions.

## 2. Theoretical framework

It is often argued that technical communication and translation, including website localisation, bear many similarities (Risku 2004; Minacori and Veisblat 2010; Suojanen *et al.* 2015; Gnechi *et al.* 2011 in Suojanen *et al.* 2015; Meex and Straub 2016; Charalampidou 2018; Cleary *et al.* 2019) allowing for the use of theoretical models and methodologies from the field of translation studies for the study of multicultural technical communication.

In this contribution a comparative analysis of technical communication in international corporate websites and two localised versions is carried out through the lens of translation-oriented Localisation Studies. Localisation refers to the adaptation of a product towards a locale. This locale refers to "the combination of sociocultural region and language in industrial settings for production and marketing purposes" (Jiménez-Crespo 2013: 12). In this sense a locale can include any information tied to a particular geographical region including cultural, legal, ethical, technical, representational, ideological and political elements (Dunne 2014 in Jiménez-Crespo 2021: 376). According to Sandrini website localisation is the "process of modifying a website for a specific locale according to the goals outlined by the client" (2005: 3). Jiménez-Crespo defines web localisation from a pragmatic-cognitive translation perspective as:

a complex communicative, cognitive, textual and technological process by which interactive digital texts are modified to be used in different linguistic and sociocultural contexts, guided by the expectations of the target audience and the specifications and degree requested by initiators (2013: 20).

Such modification is needed to avoid the receiver thinking that the specific product has been created for another audience, possibly one with a different linguistic and cultural identity, or for the global market. Technical content as an inextricable part of a corporate website's content also needs to be localised. Differences are expected to arise in the way technical content addresses users with a different linguistic and cultural background.

We are interested in multimodal message conveyance through metaphors which reinforce the operative function of the text attracting the user's attention and creating an interest in finding out more about the product that

is being promoted, including its technical functions. In order to understand the realisation of multilingual websites' function, multimodal analysis is required. Conceptual approaches to verbal (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) and multimodal metaphor (Forceville 1996, 2002, 2009) will allow for the recognition of positive properties attached to products and the way they attempt to appeal to different audiences.

However, modality and by extension multimodality lacks a succinct and acknowledged definition (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001; O'Halloran 2005). Additionally, various attempts have been made (e.g. Jewitt 2009; Kress 2010; Elleström 2010) to define the concept of mode but a terminological confusion seems to exist regarding what constitutes a mode. In this contribution, we understand the concept of mode in the sense of Forceville (2016: 244). Forceville (2016: 244) distinguishes seven types of modes: (1) written language; (2) spoken language; (3) visuals; (4) music; (5) sound; (6) gestures; (7) olfaction; (8) touch. Metaphors can be divided into mono-modal and multimodal ones: Mono-modal metaphors are "metaphors whose target and source are exclusively or pre-dominantly rendered in one mode" (Forceville 2006: 383), while multimodal metaphors are "metaphors whose target and source are each represented exclusively or predominantly in different modes" (Forceville 2006: 384). In fact, the book edited by Forceville and Urios-Aparisi (2009) comprises eighteen chapters focusing on various combinations of modes to create multimodal metaphors in a range of media and genres.

The type of metaphor that we will focus on is the multimodal one with the majority of cases mainly comprising of multimodal metaphors of the verbo-pictorial type as well as of metaphors realised through the visual, auditory and verbal mode. We will also discuss cases of the so-called hypermodality. According to Lemke:

hypermodality is the conflation of multimodality and hypertextuality. Not only do we have linkages among text units of various scales, but we have linkages among text units, visual elements, and sound units. And these go beyond the default conventions of traditional multimodal genres (2002: 301).

Multimodal metaphors constitute one of the communicative devices that website designers and web content writers can resort to in order to achieve their goal: attract users' attention, convince them of the company's reliability and urge them to buy their products. Given the fact that metaphorical phenomena are understood and interpreted on the level of implicatures and connotations (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), a level which differs across cultures, the receivers might conceive the conveyed meaning in different ways depending on their cultural background. While many conceptual metaphors, due to their bodily basis, are presumably widely shared on the planet, they also inevitably have dimensions that are culturally determined (e.g. Yu 1998, 2009; Kövecses 2005; Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2013). Thus, focusing on multimodal metaphors for the study of

digital storytelling in multilingual technical communication could be of particular interest.

Both narration and metaphors have been said to comprise persuasive means in advertising discourse (Drossou 1997; Chatzisavvidis 2000; Sidiropoulou 2004). Through technological advances narration is now part of digital storytelling and is becoming mainstreamed as it is more accessible, more widely used, and more versatile (Alexander 2017). Since narrative constitutes the main object of analysis in the present study, along with metaphors, it needs to be clearly defined. According to Abbot (2015: 18) “[...] narrative is the representation of events consisting of story and narrative discourse; story is an event or a sequence of events (the action); and narrative discourse is those events as represented.”

Likewise, Sheila Bernard defines a story as “[...] the narrative or telling, of an event or series of events, crafted in a way to interest the audiences, whether they are readers, listeners or viewers” (2011 in Alexander 2017: 6). We should keep in mind, though, that digital technology has impacted how stories are both written and experienced (Spencer 2019). Thus, the study of multimodal devices through which a narrative becomes appealing to the audience in the context of technical communication, a supposedly purely informative text type, is particularly intriguing.

Alexander (2017) attaches four parameters to his definition of narration: characters, extension in time, mystery and engagement. In his animation videos entitled the “art of story telling,” Forceville focuses on characters, places, time, actions and events, narration and focalisation. This study does not focus separately on any of the above-mentioned parameters of storytelling, but rather examines the way in which these parameters are included within the metaphorical schemata detected in the websites under examination. In other words, narrative discourse and its metaphorical realisations across different language versions constitute the main object of study.

The comparative analysis of the different language versions takes into consideration Singh and Pereira’s levels of localisation (2005), namely: (a) standardised websites, (b) semi-localised websites, (c) localised websites, (d) highly localised websites and (e) culturally customised websites, so that conclusions can be drawn regarding the adaptation level of the narrative and its metaphorical realisations.

### **3. Data and method**

To answer the research questions: how narrative strategies are developed across different language versions of a corporate website (RQ1) and how multimodal metaphors are integrated into the narrative strategies employed in these multilingual corporate websites (RQ2), selected pages of

two corporate websites of the sales informational type are analysed. These websites contain visuals (images and videos) and copy and are designed to convert website visitors to leads, i.e. prospective customers. Besides offering extensive pre-sales commercial information, these websites also typically include a post-sales support section. Sales informational websites tend to have a visually appealing landing page with good features that should encourage people to make a purchase.

The websites used for this study were randomly selected according to the following specific criteria: the availability of different language versions as well as a global .com version, the availability of technical content, the use of digital storytelling techniques and the presence of multimodal metaphors in at least one of the versions under study. We further narrowed down the selection to the product type of home appliances, more specifically refrigerators and freezers on the one hand, and washing machines and dishwashers on the other hand. We focused on the consumers section of the websites and mainly concentrated on the landing page and the content that directly links to it. It turned out that of the six websites examined (Bosch, LG, Miele, Neff, Samsung, AEG) only the LG, Miele and AEG websites fulfilled all of the above criteria. Two of them (LG and Miele) were selected for this study. The rationale behind this decision was that we did not want to include two brands from the same locale, in this case Germany. That is why we opted for one Korean (LG) and one German brand (Miele). We opted for Miele and not AEG because Miele achieves the best values of all companies surveyed — including AEG — regarding customer satisfaction and reliability (Stiftung Warentest 2018). We decided to focus on information belonging to three specific product categories in three language versions: the LG Signature product range, the LG washing machine LG TWINWash™, and the Miele dishwasher G 7000 series.

The aim was (1) to identify the narrative strategies employed in the internationalised and two localised versions of the websites under investigation and more specifically (2) to examine how multimodal metaphors are integrated into these narrative strategies. Each metaphor has two parts. The first, “literal” part is called target (domain) and its second, “figurative” part source (domain) (Forceville 2016: 243). Forceville (2016: 243) illustrates this with the examples “the world is a stage” (Shakespeare) and “football is war” (Dutch football player and coach Rinus Michels), in which “world” and “football” are the metaphors’ targets, “stage” and “war” their sources. Both target and source evoke a network of features and connotations.” (Forceville 2016: 243). To interpret something as a metaphor required deciding (1) which are its two parts, (2) which is its target and which its source, and (3) which feature or features are to be mapped from source to target (Forceville 1996: 108). The German and Greek language versions were analysed next to the internationalised one to conduct a qualitative and comparative analysis of the pictures and videos that were found on the respective landing pages.

We proceeded as follows: First, we searched for and identified the metaphors used in the three different language versions by determining their respective source and target domains. We adopted a multimodal approach to metaphor and examined different modes and how they worked together to convey metaphorical meaning. More specifically, we focused on the synergy of language, visuals (moving images, colour, different camera perspectives), sound (vocal and non-vocal) and music and examined the intermodal relations between them. Second, we studied how these multimodal metaphors were embedded in the technical storytelling. Third, we looked for similarities and differences across the different language versions.

We opted for German and Greek because Germany and Greece occupy quite different positions in the continuum of high-context and low-context cultures (Hall and Hall 1990: 6-7). According to Hall (1976:111), in high-context cultures many things are left unsaid and people rely on the context to impart meaning while in lower-context cultures it is very important for the communicator to be explicit in order to be fully understood. Moreover, according to Hall and Hall (1990: 9), “[h]igh-context people are apt to become impatient and irritated when low-context people insist on giving them information they don't need. Conversely, low-context people are at loss when high-context people do not provide enough information”. Whereas Germany as a low-context culture has been said to rely more on explicit and direct verbal communication, Greece is seen as a high context culture with its typical tendency towards metaphors as well as less direct verbal and nonverbal communication.

Content marketing is a fundamentally interdisciplinary field that brings together professionals from a wide range of disciplines with a shared interest in creating compelling, engaging and customer-friendly content. The present study, though limited in its scope as only three case studies are presented, reveals that an in-depth qualitative study at the meeting point of technical communication, localisation and multimodal discourse analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of how content marketing works, showing how it can be approached through the lens of an applied linguistics perspective.

## **4. Analysis and results**

This section presents the results of the qualitative comparative analysis for the three cases examined: LG Signature (see section 4.1), the LG washing machine TwinWash™ (see section 4.2), and the Miele dishwasher G 7000 (see section 4.3).

### **4.1 LG Signature**

LG Electronics is a global company based in Seoul, Korea. It was established in 1958 and is specialised in the manufacturing of home appliances. The



company is “committed to enriching the lives of customers through technology innovation” (About LG) and “serves as a notable example of a global company that effectively communicates its brand in diverse markets” (Matveev *et al.* 2012: 260). For the sake of this study we focus on three language versions of its website: a) the internationalised version (LG global version), b) the German version (LG German version), and c) the Greek version (LG Greek version).

On all three websites we find a video featuring the products of LG's most exclusive product line: LG Signature. On the German website the user is faced with the same video as the one on the internationalised website but with textual additions in German through which everything is explained to clarify the communication: “Wir präsentieren DIE KUNST DES WESENTLICHEN: fortschrittliche Technologie, ästhetisches Design” [We present THE ART OF ESSENCE: advanced technology, aesthetic design]. On the contrary, on the Greek website the video is found untranslated and in a less prominent place. The user can access this specific video only by clicking the link “LG SIGNATURE”.

#### 4.1.1 Internationalised version

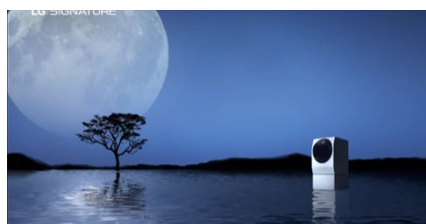
This section zooms in on metaphorical representations within the story.

##### 4.1.1.1 Metaphorical representations within the story

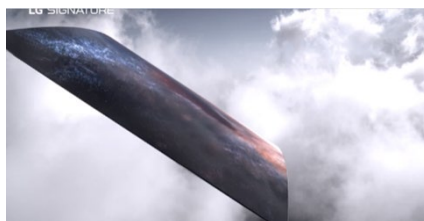
The internationalised version of the LG website (LG global version) introduces the visitor to the website through a dynamic video accompanied by calm music, which may be assumed to create a feeling of peace, relaxation and safety. Three LG SIGNATURE products are presented successively, each in a different setting: the Fridge Insta View Door-In-Door (Figure 1), the Washing Machine TwinWash® (Figure 2) and finally the Oled TV (Figure 3).



**Figure 1. The Fridge Insta View Door-In-Door (LG global version)**



**Figure 2. The Washing Machine TwinWash® (LG global version)**



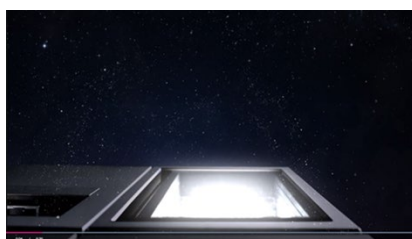
**Figure 3. The Oled TV (LG global version)**

No accompanying text is used except for the name of the product line, LG SIGNATURE, and the phrase *main washer/mini washer* in one shot showcasing the washing machine. First, we observe the fridge placed in a moonscape creating the feeling of being in space. The shot gives one the impression that the product is in space, surrounded by stars and leading, thus, to associations with innovative creations that are introduced to the market for the first time. The visual metaphors created could be described as (i) THE PRODUCT IS INNOVATION and (ii) THE PRODUCT IS ESSENCE. Applying Forceville's (2009) categorisation of pictorial metaphors, these could be characterised as contextual metaphors, since it is the context that leads to these associations. For example, there is visual reference to the elements of nature: earth, water, fire and air. These elements are the building blocks of the physical world, in other words, they are its essence. The fifth element, the ether, could be associated with concepts such as the quintessence, the unchangeable, heavenly substance of which the moon and the stars are made. The five elements are associated with the five senses, which also play a prominent role on the LG website as a whole where we find the following statements (1) and (2):

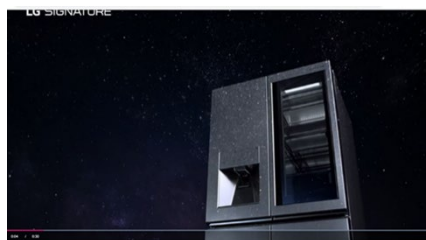
(1) "What is Greatness? Words cannot describe it. You just know it When you SEE it, TASTE it, BREATHE it, and FEEL it"

(2) "State of the art functionality meets timeless design with LG SIGNATURE."

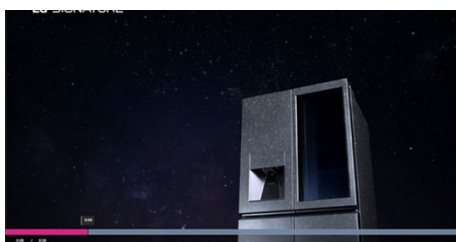
At the same time, emphasis is also placed on the product's, i.e. the fridge's technical characteristics. However, this is done implicitly and only on the pictorial level. Initially, in a close shot the viewer sees the interior of the fridge, which is lit and then, through shots that gradually zoom out from the product, the interior is depicted as it becomes dark (Figures 4-6).



**Figure 4. Close shot of the interior of the Fridge Insta View Door-In-Door (LG global version)**



**Figure 5. Medium shot of the interior of the Fridge Insta View Door-In-Door (LG global version)**



**Figure 6. Long shot of the interior of the Fridge Insta View Door-In-Door (LG global version)**

The fact that you can see the interior of the fridge lit without opening the door but simply by knocking twice is one of the basic technical characteristics that sets this product apart from other models. Thus, although not stated overtly, its innovative characteristic is introduced to the consumers, preparing them for more details they may want to discover either in the internationalised or in the localised versions.

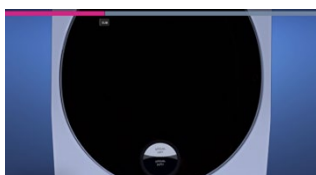
In the next part of the video there is a close shot of the moon which is gradually transformed into a washing machine's load (Figures 7-10). The visual metaphor used here is a 'dynamic simile' between the product and the moon in the sense of Forceville (2009), that is the two concepts are compared, not in a static but rather in gradual way and it can be expressed as THE PRODUCT IS THE MOON leading to more metaphorical interpretations, such as THE PRODUCT IS THE FUTURE/THE PRODUCT IS TRANSITION. In our opinion, the moon simile signifies the future since the concept of the moon immediately creates associations with man's achievement to land on the moon as well as with space in general. The moon is also the symbol of transition, renewal and natural cycle due to its different phases. Thus, integrating such a metaphor in the narrative of the video, depending on the receivers' interpretations, futuristic attributes are attached to the product or a link is created between the cyclical function of the washing load and the moon cycle.



**Figure 7. Depiction of the source domain, the moon (LG global version)**



**Figure 8. Depiction of the merging between source and target domain (LG global version)**

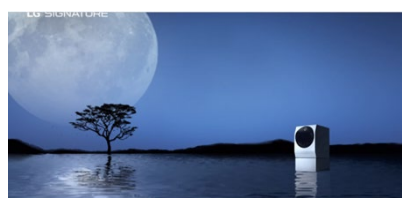


**Figure 9. Depiction of the target domain, the washing machine TwinWash® (LG global version)**



**Figure 10. Depiction of the product (the target domain), the washing machine TwinWash® (LG global version)**

The product, the washing machine, is finally placed in a setting similar to the previous one but this time the element of water, depicted in the picture, can be very closely associated with the functional characteristics of the product (Figure 11).



**Figure 11. Depiction of the product in a water setting (LG global version)**

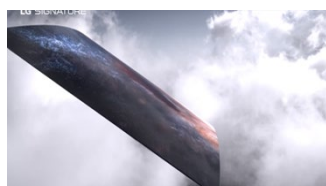
Next, the viewer is transferred to a different scene in stark contrast to the previous one. In the middle of an arid desert there are three shadows, one of which is suddenly transformed into a leaf flying in the sky and finally landing on a wall, taking the form of a TV (Figures 12-15).



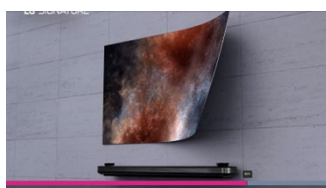
**Figure 12. The product, Oled TV, in the setting of a desert (LG global version)**



**Figure 13. The product, Oled TV, rising from the sand ready to fly (LG global version)**



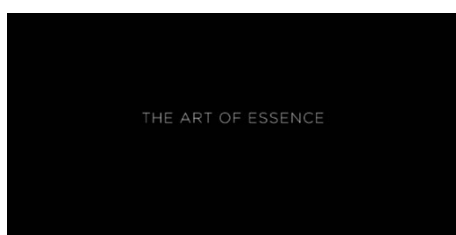
**Figure 14. The product, Oled TV, flying among clouds (LG global version)**



**Figure 15. The product, Oled TV, placed on the wall of a house (LG global version)**

The visual metaphor created is again a dynamic pictorial simile which associates the light weight of the leaf with the product: THE LG OLED TV IS LIGHT LIKE A LEAF. Using this technique of visual storytelling, the product's technical feature is again promoted in an implicit way.

The video ends with the appearance of the text THE ART OF ESSENCE, which anchors to the image (Barthes 2007) and directs the user to the intended interpretation of the image through the creation of a common multimodal metaphor for all three products: LG PRODUCTS ARE ART/LG INNOVATION IS ART combining functionality and practicality with aesthetics (Figure 16).



**Figure 16. Association of the product Oled TV with the concept of art through verbal means (LG global version)**

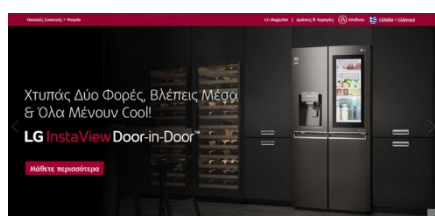
#### 4.1.1.2. Narrative strategy

In the internationalised website the persuasive communicative function is based on the digital story displayed on the landing page. In this story multimodal metaphors are integrated in the narration and work in synergy to attract users' attention, create interest and desire and potentially lead them to action. The main characters of the story are the products themselves, while the setting in all three cases is futuristic. This setting is

consistent with the supernatural characteristics that are attributed to all three protagonist-products through implied multimodal metaphors and with the fact that technical characteristics play a central role in the products' innovative profile. Thus, the internationalised version provides the user with a digital story which, mainly through visual and audio codes, presents the promoted products' basic technical characteristics along with a multitude of implied metaphorical meanings. Following the narrative of the internationalised version, the website's localised versions continue the story by offering a detailed presentation of each of the products separately. This will become apparent from the next section 4.1.2, in which we focus on indicative examples from the German and Greek language versions of the LG website.

#### 4.1.2 Localised versions

From both the Greek (LG Greek version: refrigerators) and the German (LG German version: home appliances) localised versions it can be observed that the fridge's technical characteristics are explicitly referred to both verbally and visually. Verbally the story opens with the generic phrase *Χτυπάς Δύο Φορές, Βλέπεις Μέσα & Όλα Μένουν Cool!* [You knock twice, you can see inside and everything stays cool!] in the Greek version (Figure 17) and *Zweimal klopfen, reinschauen* [Knock twice, look inside] in the German one. The verbal mode is intertwined with the visual one through which the product's interior is depicted lit, hence making it visible to the user.



**Figure 17. Greek version of the landing page for Fridge Insta View Door-In-Door (LG Greek version: refrigerators)**

##### 4.1.2.1 Hypertextual narrative strategies through multimodal metaphors

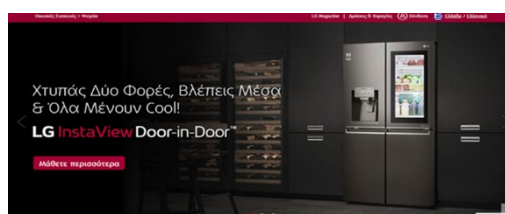
The narrative strategy used in the localised versions is of a completely different nature from the one used in the internationalised website. Both the space setting as well as the corresponding video are absent in the landing page for fridges. Although the technical characteristic highlighted is the same, the slogan in combination with the visual depiction states it much more explicitly as a call-to-action for the user who is invited to discover how this feature works. Whereas the Greek slogan takes the form of a peremptory declarative, the German slogan expresses the instruction by means of an infinitive construction, the so-called *imperativischer Infinitiv*. Additionally, the use of the verb *knock* creates associations with fairy tales (e.g. the story of The Three Little Pigs) and at the same time leads to the formation of the metaphor THE FRIDGE IS A HOUSE THAT WE CAN ENTER,



thus again attracting the user's interest to learn more about the product. In fact, the HOUSE metaphor opens the window for an intrahypertextual meaning transfer and facilitates the narrative strategy which traverses webpages of the same website (Figures 18-19). Thus, the user moves from superficial description of technical content to a more detailed one following the hypertextual digital story of the website.

If users decide to learn more, they may follow the relevant link to a detailed description of the product, which includes images from different angles as well as further links to its characteristics, its technical specifications and to customer support. In the German version, you can also access customer reviews from the pane below the product specifications and see test results of independent consumer organisations, which may help users make well-informed choices. Thus, technical communication seems to form part of the pre-sales marketing narrative in both the internationalised and the German and Greek localised versions but to a different extent.

When relating the narrative used in the internationalised version to the localised ones, we can apply Lemke's (2002: 300-301) notion of hypermodality. Given that users may access a website from multiple entry points, the connection created between image, text and sound is not limited to a single webpage. Depending on the specific entry point users may be immediately directed through a search engine to the localised website section for fridges and get acquainted with the product and its technical specifications. The hypertext medium allows both for a transfer of meaning along traversals created by the users themselves and for following a predefined path set up by designers by means of specific coherence cues.



**Figure 18. Greek landing page for Fridge Insta View Door-In-Door (LG Greek version: refrigerators)**



**Figure 19. Greek webpage with technical characteristics of the Fridge Insta View Door-In-Door (LG Greek version: technical characteristics fridge)**

Apart from intrahypertextual meaning transfer, that is, construction of meaning-relationships within the same website, interhypertextual meaning transfer is also possible when the user initially visits the internationalised website and then moves to a localised version. A case in point is the LG

Signature video discussed in section 4.1.1, which may function as an introductory point to the same thematic unit which is developed cross-medially from one website version to another or from one webpage of the same website to another.

Suppose that you start from the landing page on the internationalised website and follow the path to one of the localised versions, then the narrative constitutes a continuum ranging from the internationalised version with its general presentation of the product's broad functionalities to one of the localised versions, where more details are revealed in various sections of the same hypertext. In this sense, a kind of hypermodal storytelling is achieved which extends from one website to the other and from one webpage to the other. This type of hypermodal narrative highly depends on the user's choices and the paths that s/he creates. On the contrary, the story told in the internationalised video is a different type of storytelling which follows a more traditional line with a predefined path from start to end. Both types of storytelling project the products' technical characteristics moving from the general to the specific. Regarding the level of adaptation we could state that this example constitutes a case of cultural customisation since the symbolic elements used in the narrative can be perceived by both German and Greek users increasing, thus, the possibility of leading them to consumption. Moreover, the increased verbal explicitness of the German version compared to the Greek one illustrates and supports Hall's categorisation of Germany and Greece as a low-context and high-context culture, respectively.

## **4.2 LG TWINWash™**

### **4.2.1 Two narrative strategies in parallel**

In the localised version for the Greek market (but not for the German one) a video is used to promote a new model of dishwashers: the TWINWash™. In this video with the title "For the 1st time in the world WASH AND SPIN TWO LOADS AT THE SAME TIME", the narrative develops in the form of a brief description of a technological evolution starting with the invention of the lamp, the telephone, the car, the aeroplane, landing on the moon and ending with the TWINWash™ washing machine.

The language used in the narrative is English with Greek subtitles. The video has not been localised. This may be due to the fact that technological evolution can be seen as a fairly universal topic without the need for reference to culture-specific characteristics.

The hyperstructure is comparable to the one of the fridge with the video constituting an introductory point. If you follow the link *learn more* you are directed to more images and to a short video as well as to further links to the characteristics and the technical specifications of the product.



A second narrative is developed on the web page following the introductory one, both in the Greek and in the German version. Emphasis is put on the company's attempt to make washing laundry enjoyable. "STARTING FROM THE USER" (LG Greek version: TwinWash), or more specifically from the problems users face when they are washing clothes, LG developed its TWINWash™ Technology with which the company wanted to meet the need for large capacity washing machines. The innovation lies in the fact that users can wash two loads at the same time in two independent washing cycles: "THE IMPORTANCE OF TWO SEPARATE WASHING CYCLES" (LG Greek version: TwinWash). The video explains this new approach to washing ("A NEW APPROACH" (LG Greek version: TwinWash)) by zooming in on the technical details of the washing machine and on the increased usability.

#### 4.2.1.2 Multimodal metaphors within the narrative

In the slogans used in between in the form of titles for each section the rhetorical figure of metaphor is repeatedly used associating the process of washing or the washing machine itself with efficiency, innovation & problem solving and revolutionary experience, as described in Table 1.

<b>Metaphorical expression</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>
AN EFFICIENT WASHING MACHINE OF 36 CENTIMETERS	THE PRODUCT IS EFFICIENCY
REDEFINITION OF THE WASHING MACHINE AND PROBLEM RESOLUTION THROUGH INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS	THE PRODUCT IS INNOVATION THE PRODUCT IS THE SOLUTION TO A USER PROBLEM
A REVOLUTIONARY LAUNDRY EXPERIENCE	THE PRODUCT IS REVOLUTIONARY EXPERIENCE

**Table 1. Metaphors used in the LG TWINWash™ video**

In each episode the product's technical characteristics merge into the narrative as they are not only described through the verbal mode but they are also depicted visually making in this way the description more comprehensible and also convincing and appealing to the user. It is interesting to note that the visual and the verbal mode are used interchangeably with no specific pattern either in the source or in the target domain of the metaphor.

We will discuss the metaphors in Table 1 adopting Forceville's methodology of metaphor analysis in the genre of commercial advertising (Forceville

1996, 2007, 2016, 2017). It is important to note that in advertising, we are primarily dealing with creative metaphors, whose underlying schema is usually not “ABSTRACT A IS CONCRETE B” (Forceville 2017: 27) as in Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980: 108-109) Conceptual Metaphor Theory but rather “CONCRETE A IS CONCRETE B” (Forceville 2017: 27). According to Forceville:

most metaphors in commercial advertising have the advertised product/service, or an object metonymically associated with it, as the metaphor’s target domain. This product is then coupled with something else. Interpreting the metaphor then boils down to finding positive qualities of the “something else,” the source domain, that can be mapped onto the product (1996: 28).

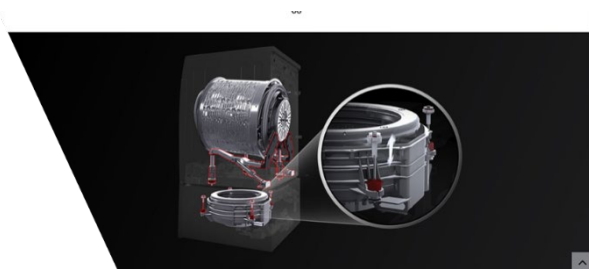
A successful advertising metaphor ensures that positive associations, both fact-oriented and emotional, are mapped from source to target such that the advertised product or the brand is coupled with the positive qualities of the source concept.



**Figure 20. Depiction of a washing machine part of 36 centimetres (LG Greek version: TwinWash)**

First, in the metaphor THE PRODUCT IS EFFICIENCY the source domain is realised verbally (EFFICIENT) and the target domain both verbally (WASHING MACHINE) and visually (via a metonymy that consists of a technical part of the washing machine and the washing machine itself) (Figure 20). However, through the metonymy a second metaphor can be drawn which refers clearly to the technical characteristics of the product: SMALL SIZE IS EFFICIENCY. Thus, the promotional presentation of the product is closely related to technical content though implicitly through a multimodal metaphor.

Second, two metaphors can be extracted: i) THE PRODUCT IS INNOVATION and ii) THE PRODUCT IS THE SOLUTION TO A USER PROBLEM (Figure 21).



**Figure 21. Inside view of the washing machine to illustrate innovation and problem solving through technology (LG Greek version: TwinWash)**

In both metaphors the target domain, which comprises the product as usual, is both metonymically depicted and verbally expressed (WASHING MACHINE) while the source domain (INNOVATION/SOLUTION TO A PROBLEM) is explicitly stated (INNOVATIVE/PROBLEM RESOLUTION) through verbal means.

Third, and finally, the metaphorical expression A REVOLUTIONARY LAUNDRY EXPERIENCE is of a somewhat different nature: although the target domain is expressed both verbally (laundry) and visually (depiction of the washing machine), the source domain (REVOLUTION) is also multimodally realised through both text (REVOLUTIONARY) and image (the technical element which constitutes a revolution) (Figure 22).



**Figure 22. Outside view of the washing machine showing the two drums (LG Greek version: TwinWash)**

The combined use of text and image for the metaphorical representation of products and their technical specifications on corporate websites enhances their persuasive function since, as Forceville (2007: 297) notes, “apart from their greater degree of comprehensibility, metaphors drawing on images, sounds, and music have a more intense, immediate emotional impact than verbal ones”.

If we compare the narratives employed in the Greek and the German version of the websites, the concepts of efficiency and problem solution are projected equally. However, in the Greek version there is an extra narrative which focuses on the landmarks of human technological innovation. The product is seen as a major achievement in a series of remarkable historical innovations: THE PRODUCT IS A LANDMARK IN TECHNOLOGICAL EVOLUTION. This attempt to appeal to the Greek audience through an extra metaphor reflects once more how Greek is ranking as a high context-culture according to Hall (1976) and indicates the company’s attempt to culturally customise the website.

#### **4.3 #LifeBeyondOrdinary: the Miele dishwasher G 7000**

Miele is a leading German manufacturer of premium household appliances for cooking, baking, steaming, cooling, coffee making, dish washing, washing and cleaning. The dishwasher G 7000 — and with it a short video (45 seconds length) — was launched in October 2018 as part of a global

brand campaign to promote Miele's newest dishwasher G 7000 series (Miele #LifeBeyondOrdinary). The promotional video was localised into English and it can be found on the internationalised version of the website (but not on the Greek one). It is the same video as in the German version of the website although with the text spoken in English, i.e. not with subtitles but dubbed over. An actor speaks the words, both in the German and in the internationalised English language version. The video contains a mix of celebrity content marketing, visual storytelling, and multimodal metaphor, while also communicating technical content. This makes the video a suitable candidate to examine how a multimodal rhetoric of technical communication is integrated within a narrative.

#### 4.3.1 Internationalised and German version

The video is entitled "Life Beyond Ordinary" (Miele #LifeBeyondOrdinary). We first describe the narrative built up and then identify the multimodal metaphors that are used within the narrative.

##### 4.3.1.1 Narrative strategy

First the viewers hear the sound of a deep breath. Simultaneously, they see blue water with light coming from above and the hashtag #LifeBeyondOrdinary. The camera then moves to the surface of the water. Marina Kazankova, a Russian champion freediver and actress, makes her appearance. An actor narrating the video tells her story. The text "Marina Kazankova, world record holder in freediving" is displayed.

Then, very quickly, with the accompanying music speed up, an establishing shot from above depicts a boat followed by two close shots, one of the boat and one featuring Marina Kazankova on that boat wearing a diving suit and ready to dive. A third close-up shot shows Marina Kazankova's face. The viewer sees her close her eyes and in the next few shots she is diving under water, descending below the surface alongside the rope to enter a beautiful underwater setting. The viewers see Marina Kazankova diving, swimming, spinning around, floating, even walking, experiencing freedom and the impossible. This takes up more than half of the video.

Finally, Kazankova comes to the surface of the water again, breathing out and breathing in, eyes closed. The actor narrates the video in the first person singular, sharing and explaining Marina Kazankova's values and her attitude to life: "I never wanted a conventional life, I wanted more, to get one step further than others. Do something nobody else is doing. Limits, there are none. That's exactly what I want in every detail of my life" (Miele #LifeBeyondOrdinary).

All this is an example of celebrity marketing and implicit product endorsement, in which the celebrity is involved in the image of the brand with the aim of establishing a brand association in the minds of consumers.

In the last quarter of the video, the Miele dishwasher becomes prominent (Figure 23). This new protagonist is presented to the viewer in the same setting (i.e. on a rock in the ocean). In this way, Miele creates an association of experiences, using visual storytelling and multimodal metaphor: “The G 7000 dishwasher sets new benchmarks – so do I” (Miele #LifeBeyondOrdinary). The dishwasher opens itself and the technical innovations of the product are specified both verbally and visually with a close shot. We learn that the dishwasher is equipped with the cleaning system AutoDos and the integrated PowerDisk®, which automatically doses the detergent.



**Figure 23. Front view of the G 7000 dishwasher loaded and with the door half open, depicted on a rock in the water (Miele #LifeBeyondOrdinary)**

In the last shot, the endorsement becomes more explicit, as we watch Kazankova in a kitchen setting and the wording “Also here I set new standards, with Miele” (Miele #LifeBeyondOrdinary). Finally, the brand slogan is displayed, in German: “Miele. Immer besser” [Forever Better] (Miele #LifeBeyondOrdinary).

The message conveyed is that Miele customers “experience freedom like never before” (Miele #LifeBeyondOrdinary) when using the new Miele dishwasher, just like Marina Kazankova does. Likewise, the Miele company “redefines the limits of possibilities” and “sets new standards” (Miele #LifeBeyondOrdinary). The association is further linked to Miele’s brand slogan and promise “Immer besser”.

#### 4.3.1.2 Multimodal metaphors within the narrative

We may observe here a metaphorical transfer of force-dynamic conceptual patterns to the social-psychological domain, involving a degree of (competitive) interaction between (opposing) forces in organisational optimisation processes (more, better, excellent) (Meex *et al.* 2013: 164-165). Force-dynamic optimisation processes entail that the organisation (agonist) is portrayed as an entity that is exposed to opposing forces (antagonist), in market competition. In our example, Miele sets itself a higher-level target in the competitive environment in two respects: the company will continue to strive to be “forever better” than its competitors and “forever better” than it already is. This force-dynamic tension between

agonist and antagonist is expressed by means of both verbal and visual metaphor, as can be seen from Table 2:

<b>Metaphorical expression</b>	<b>Metaphor</b>
THERE ARE NO LIMITS	THERE ARE NO LIMITS TO TECHNICAL INNOVATION THE COMPANY ADHERES TO ITS BRAND SLOGAN "Immer Besser" THE COMPANY IS INFINITE/CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT
LIFE BEYOND ORDINARY	THE COMPANY IS THE IMPOSSIBLE
TO GET ONE STEP/ONE METER FURTHER THAN OTHERS TO BE THE FIRST	THE COMPANY ADHERES TO ITS BRAND SLOGAN "Immer Besser" THE PRODUCT/COMPANY IS INNOVATION
THE DISHWASHER SETS NEW BENCHMARKS/STANDARDS	THE PRODUCT IS INNOVATION THE PRODUCT BREAKS WITH A TRADITION
THE DISHWASHER REDEFINES THE LIMITS OF POSSIBILITIES	USING THE PRODUCT IS EXPERIENCING FREEDOM THE PRODUCT IS FREEDOM

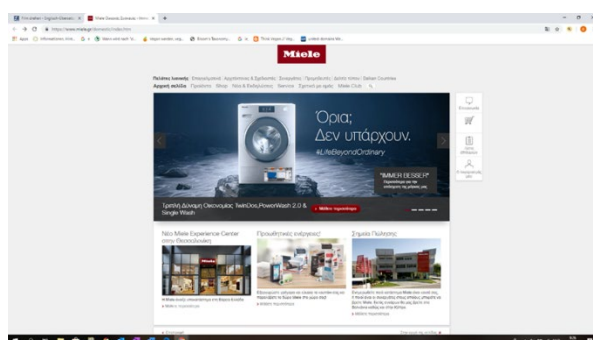
**Table 2. Metaphors used in the Miele dishwasher G 7000 video**

#### 4.3.2 Greek version

##### 4.3.2.1 Multimodal metaphors within the narrative

As already stated, the Miele diver video does not appear in the Greek version of the website. Instead, a different metaphor of a war ship at sea is deployed: "Οι Ναυαρχίδες της πλύσης είναι εδώ !!" [The flagship of washing is here !!] (Miele Greek version: flagship). This is somewhat surprising given that the video was filmed in front of the Greek island Kalymnos, one of the international hotspots for freediving. However, the image of the product (the washing machine in this case and not the dishwasher) on the rock at the bottom of the sea is retained, along with the title "Limits? There aren't any" and the campaign slogan #LifeBeyondOrdinary (Figure 24). The slogan

“Immer Besser” is also prominently displayed, accompanied by the text “Learn more regarding the promise of our brand.”



**Figure 24. Depiction of the TwinWash® machine in an underwater setting and ‘Triple Strength of Economy’ (Miele Greek version: flagship)**

In Figure 24 the text reads “Τριπλή Δύναμη Οικονομίας” [Triple Strength of Economy] TwinDos, PowerWash 2.0 & Single Wash”. *Οικονομίας* may refer to both saving energy, i.e. energy efficiency, and to power. If you click on the red button underneath the picture to learn more, you are redirected to a page with the title: “Οι Ναυαρχίδες της πλύσης είναι εδώ !!” [The flagship of washing is here !!]. *Ναυαρχίδες* is the capital ship, i.e. the leading ship in a naval or war fleet on which the most important officer (the admiral) sails. In our context, i.e. applied to the Miele company, this metaphor refers to the company’s leading position on the international market of household appliances. Put metaphorically, Miele is the flagship (*Ναυαρχίδες*) of the sector, reflected in the slogan “Οι Ναυαρχίδες της πλύσης είναι εδώ !!” [The flagship of washing is here !!]. Table 3 provides an overview of these metaphors.

Metaphorical expression	Metaphor
LIMITS? THERE AREN'T ANY	THERE ARE NO LIMITS TO TECHNICAL INNOVATION THE COMPANY ADHERES TO ITS BRAND SLOGAN “Immer Besser” THE COMPANY IS CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT
LIFE BEYOND ORDINARY	THE COMPANY IS THE IMPOSSIBLE
THE FLAGSHIP OF WASHING IS HERE	THE COMPANY IS THE FLAGSHIP/LEADER OF THE SECTOR

**Table 3. Metaphors used for the campaign #LifeBeyondOrdinary in the Greek version of the website**

Comparing the different versions it seems that the water element is retained in all of them. However, the association of the product with the concept of water is different in each case. What is evident in the German and the Greek version is an attempt to appeal to the two audiences by recalling familiar concepts through metaphorical meaning making. Greeks are acquainted with flagships in a naval sense and at the same time conceive positive connotations of leadership and prominence related to the metaphorical meaning of the term, while Germans associate the Miele brand with craftsmanship, top performance and sustainability guiding the 'Immer Besser – Forever Better' philosophy. In its new brand campaign, which was launched in 2020, Miele no longer focuses on the company's long history and tradition but on redefining the limits of possibilities, which is reflected in the metaphorical rhetoric of the narrative used. This helps users relate with the product and potentially decide to buy it.

Thus, there is an attempt to culturally customise the two website versions but it seems that this is achieved only in the German one where a more developed narrative strategy is adopted. In the Greek version the narrative changes along with the story that is being told but it is only partly developed as it relies solely on one image contrary to the lengthy video found in the German version. Thus, the level of adaptation in the Greek version is lower than in the German one.

## **5. Discussion and conclusion**

In this contribution, we presented the results of a pilot study on multimodal technical content found on the corporate websites of LG Electronics and Miele. A close examination of the landing pages of the German and Greek language versions and the internationalised version of these websites revealed that in all versions technical content is merged with marketing content thus creating a hybrid form of narrative strategy, in which the products' technical characteristics are prominently incorporated. Among the narrative strategies used are:

- multimodal conceptual metaphors (visual, verbal, auditive)
- use of fairy tale generic phrases
- problem-solving
- celebrity endorsement.

A multimodal approach to the analysis of the narrative allowed us to decipher the metaphors intertwined with storytelling. Multimodal contextual metaphors and dynamic pictorial similes merge with the narrative to support the promotion of products in line with the company's vision. The Fridge Insta View Door-In-Door by LG is associated with innovation, futurism and high technology while the LG TwinWash gives solutions to problems and emphasises the experience of enjoyment. Similarly, the Miele Dishwasher is associated with high performance and prominence.



Because Germany and Greece occupy quite different positions in the continuum of high-context and low-context cultures (Hall 1976), multimodal metaphors' culture-specificity was expected to reveal discrepancies in different language versions. Indeed, in two out of the three cases that we examined the appeal to the audience was attempted through the projection of similar values which pertain to both cultures. In the Miele case study the stories told were of a different nature in the German and in the Greek version, conforming to the receivers' expectations. In the LG TwinWash case an extra narrative was included in the Greek version. However, we found identical content and similar values regarding product quality in both cases. In the Fridge Insta View Door-In-Door case both the values projected and the storytelling were similar as both the German and the Greek audiences are familiar with fairy tale generic phrases. Overall, in line with Hall's (1976) high- and low-context cultures, we did notice more explicitness in the German version. For example, think of the additional, written text displayed in the LG brand story video. The Greek version of the websites use more metaphors (e.g. 'Ναυαρχίδες' [flagships]), the product as a landmark of innovation). It seems, thus, that in the examples that we have studied Hall's ranking of the two cultures is reflected. Germans belonging to a low-context culture need to state everything explicitly while communication among Greek people (belonging to a high-context culture) can be more implicit and rely more on figurative discourse.

Summing up, we can claim that in most of the cases under study there is some cultural customisation (Singh and Pereira 2005) evident in the adaptation of the narrative to users' expectations despite the promoted company's stable values.

Furthermore, we came across instances of hypermodality in the sense of Lemke (2002: 300-301) linking text units, visual elements, and sound units both across webpages in one language version (intrahypertextual) and across language versions (interhypertextual). More specifically, the LG website is an indicative example of hypermodal narration which traverses different websites if a reading path from the internationalised version to the localised ones is followed and then from the landing page with the product's general technical characteristics to webpages with technical details.

This contribution presents results from an in-depth analysis of a limited number of brands and their websites. These conclusions are tentative, and need confirmation with further research, including more brands, more product categories and preferably also more languages in order to make more general statements. A corpora-based study, for example, including verbal and non-verbal semiotic systems would allow for more general conclusions regarding technical content localisation in corporate websites and its association with culture-specificity. Despite its limited scope the present study highlights the value and power of website narrative strategies to overcome cultural barriers. Hopefully, the results from this study can

inspire future research at the crossroads of localisation, technical communication and content marketing.

Given that content development teams are increasingly cross-functional and interdisciplinary (Meex and Karreman 2022: 131, 140), the findings of this study could also be of interest to professionals in highly interdisciplinary workplaces such as design teams on content creation. The findings of this study can also inform curriculum design, in order to develop powerful and interdisciplinary applied linguistics curricula for students in translation & localisation, technical communication and digital content design.

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