ICEB 2023 Proceedings (Chiayi, Taiwan)

International Conference on Electronic Business (ICEB)

Fall 12-1-2023

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Study on the Influencing Factors of Chinese Consumers' Continuous Purchase Intention on Cross-Border Beauty Products

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, Chinese consumers have more and more demands for cross-border beauty products, so it is of practical significance to explore their continuous purchase intention. A research model is constructed based on SOR theory model in this study, in which the "stimulus" (S) factor is customer perceived value, including emotional value, functional value, social value; the "organic" (O) factors are perceived gain and customer satisfaction; "Response" (R) is consumers' continuous purchase intention. Based on 451 valid survey data, it is found that emotional value, functional value and social value have a positive impact on perceived gain and customer satisfaction, and perceived gain and customer satisfaction have a positive impact on continuous purchase intention, and perceived gain has a more significant impact on continuous purchase intention. In addition, perceived gain and customer satisfaction have partial mediation effects on the relationship between stimulus (S) and behavioral response (R). According to the research results, some suggestions are put forward for the merchants or enterprises engaged in cross-border beauty products industry.

Keywords: cross-border beauty products, SOR theory, continuous purchase intention, customer perceived value

INTRODUCTION

iiMedia Research data shows that among China's cross-border e-commerce users, 56.19% consumers shop 3-6 times a month, 31.19% consumers shop less than 3 times a month, 11.14% consumers shop 6-9 times a month, 1.49% of consumers shop 10 or more times per month in 2022. It shows that Chinese e-commerce users are more enthusiastic about cross-border shopping. With the improvement of Chinese people's consumption level, people's demand for beauty products is increasing. Data from the Prospective Industry Research Institute of the General Administration of Customs of China show that China's cosmetics imports amounted to $16.804 billion from January to November 2022. According to the "2023 Cross-border Import Consumption Report" released by Jingdong International, nutrition and health care, mother and infant products, beauty and skin care products, 3C categories and medical categories ranked top 5 in terms of consumption among cross-border imported goods, and 3C categories, personal care, household appliances, alcohol, beauty and skin care products grew faster year-on-year. With the birth of a large number of cross-border e-commerce platforms such as NetEase Koala, Tmall International, Jingdong International, and Ymatou, the cross-border beauty products available to Chinese consumers are increasing, and the range of choices are also expanding.

At present, there are few researches on cross-border beauty products in China. The existing researches mainly focus on customer satisfaction, analysis of influencing factors of cross-border beauty products online shopping decision-making, problems and countermeasures of cross-border beauty products e-commerce. Chai Zhengmeng, Men Yafang, and Liu Na (2020) collected data by means of online questionnaire survey, established an evaluation index system by using F-AHP, calculated the customer satisfaction of four cross-border beauty e-commerce companies such as Taobao and Jingdong, and gave suggestions on improving the customer satisfaction of the beauty industry on cross-border e-commerce platforms. Ma Liting and Yi Siqi (2020) analyzed the obstacles to the development of beauty products on cross-border e-commerce platforms, conducted an empirical study based on the technology acceptance model, and concluded that perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived safety, and perceived product quality significantly and positively affected the decision of cross-border online shopping of beauty products. Ye Yangxiang (2021) analyzed the development status and problems of B2C import cross-border e-commerce of beauty products, and proposed four strategic suggestions on optimizing business model, strengthening cooperation in emerging channels, integrating advantages, strengthening cooperation with offline stores, strengthening cooperation with cutting-edge products, expanding platform differentiation and innovative marketing.

To sum up, there is a lack of domestic research on the factors affecting Chinese consumers' continuous purchase intention of cross-border beauty products. Under the beauty economy background, consumers pay more attention to their appearance, and beauty products are increasingly popular with Chinese consumers. China has a large population and a large market volume.

Exploring the factors that affect Chinese consumers' continuous purchase intention of cross-border beauty products has certain reference significance for enterprises engaged in cross-border beauty trade. Based on SOR theoretical model, an influencing factor model of Chinese consumers' continuous purchase intention of cross-border beauty products is constructed in this study. Relying on the questionnaire survey data, this study explores the internal mechanism of Chinese consumers' continuous purchase intention of cross-border beauty products. It helps cross-border beauty trade enterprises to have a deeper understanding of consumers' internal psychological demands and implement effective operation management strategies.

MODEL CONSTRUCTION AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS
Model Construction
SOR theory is one of the basic theories of modern cognitive psychology. SOR theory includes three elements: Stimulus, Organism, and Response. Izard (1977) pointed out that S (Stimulus Variables) is the stimulus of external environment, which is the root cause that affects the motivation of the agent. O (Organism Variables) refers to the psychological and cognitive changes of the organism with cognitive ability generated by stimulation. It is the internal process and structure of the agent between "stimulation" and "reaction". The process and structure are composed of activities such as perception, psychology, feeling and thinking. R (Response Variables) refers to the various responses and behaviors produced by the organism as a result of stimuli. SOR model is shown in Figure 1. The explanatory function of SOR theory generally lies in the analysis of the relationship between environmental stimuli and behavioral subjects' psychological activities and specific behaviors. Individuals' responses to external stimuli are not mechanical and passive, and people have subjective initiative. Individuals are capable of effective information processing under the stimulus to make rational behavioral decisions.
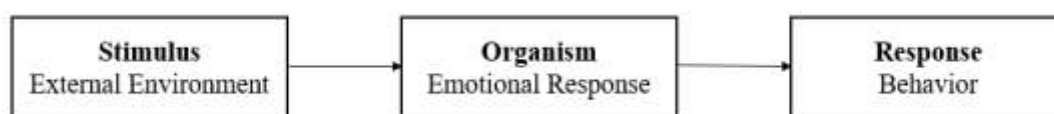

Fig 1: SOR Model

The application of SOR theory to the study of consumer behavior shows that consumers are affected by stimulus factors, and then they make emotional response, finally, they make a purchase. Zeithaml (1988) believes that customer perceived value is a subjective evaluation formed by customers after weighing perceived benefits and costs when purchasing products or services. Talwar (2021) believes that only good customer perception can prompt customers to make purchases. Chinese consumers' continuous purchase intention of cross-border beauty products is the result of a combination of internal and external factors. Based on the SOR theoretical model, the perceived value (emotional value, functional value, social value) is regarded as the factor (S) of consumers' stimulation, the internal psychological reaction (perceived gain, customer satisfaction) generated by consumers after stimulation is regarded as an organism with internal cognition (O), and the psychological reaction is continuous purchase intention of cross-border beauty products, which is regarded as a behavioral response (R). The specific research model is shown in Figure 2.
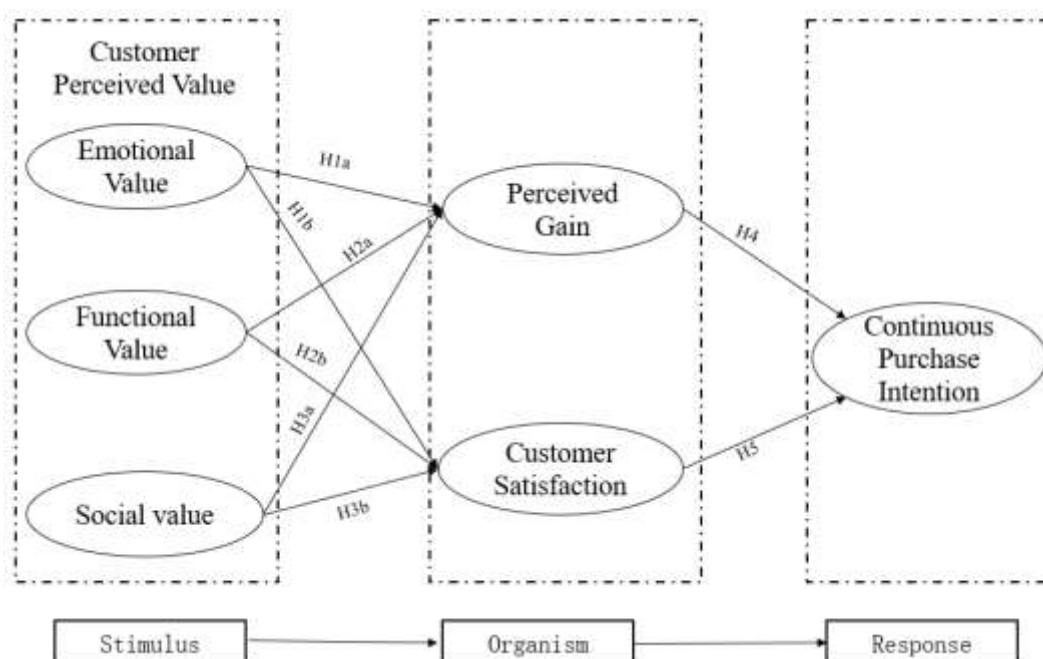
（*Note:* R is continuous purchase intention）
Fig 2: Research Model

Research Hypothesis

Since Kotler et al. (1969) put forward the concept of customer perceived value, it has received extensive attention from scholars at home and abroad. Customer perceived value is not specific and invariable, and the dimensions of perceived value are divided differently in different research scenarios and objects. Sheth et al. (1991) divided customer perceived value into social value, emotional value, functional value, cognitive value and situational value. Sweeney et al. (2001) pointed out that customer perceived value can be mainly divided into four value dimensions: quality value, price value, emotional value and social value. Bai Changhong (2001) believes that customer perceived value generally includes functional value, emotional value and social value. Yang Xiaoyan et al. (2006) divided customer value into functional value, emotional value, social value and green value when they studied customer perceived value of green products. Zhang Guozheng et al. (2017) added and verified the safety value on the basis of functional value, emotional value and social value according to the safety characteristics of certified agricultural products when they studied the perceived value of customers of certified agricultural products. It can be seen that customers' perceived value of products with different characteristics is different. Based on previous studies, emotional value, functional value and social value are adopted to measure customer perceived value.

The research of customer perceived value is a very important part of consumer behavior. From the perspective of customers, the basic goal of their purchasing behavior is to obtain value. Zhang Guozheng et al. (2017) found that the functional value, emotional value and social value of customers' perceived value of certified agricultural products positively affected customers' purchase intention. Cui Dengfeng and Li Shumei (2018) believe that functional value, emotional value, social value and regional value are the most important driving factors affecting customers' purchasing behavior tendency, which can stimulate customers' purchasing intention and ultimately lead to their purchasing behavior. Zeithaml (1988) conducted a large number of studies from the perspective of consumer psychology by using empirical methods, and concluded that when consumers choose a product, the greater the perceived benefits brought by the product, the greater the perceived value of consumers will be enhanced, and a higher level of perceived value will improve consumers' purchase intention. Wang Ran, Ji Chunlan, and Xu Xiaoxue (2022) found that perceived value has a positive impact on perceived profit, and perceived profit also has a positive impact on purchase intention in their research on the influence mechanism of customers' perceived value on wine purchasing behavior. The perceived gain in the purchase process of cross-border beauty products is affected by the perceived value, thus affecting consumers' continuous purchase intention. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1a: Emotional value has a positive impact on perceived gain.
H2a: Functional value has a positive effect on perceived gain.
H3a: Social value has a positive effect on perceived gain.
H4: Perceived gain has a positive effect on continuous purchase intention.

Customer satisfaction was proposed by American scholar Cardozo in 1965 and applied to the field of marketing. Customer satisfaction is influenced by many factors. Parasuraman (1994) believed that price, product and service quality affect customer satisfaction, and there is a functional relationship between customer satisfaction and price, product and service quality. Tu Hongbo, Xu Caosen and Zhao Xiaofei (2021) found that the higher the satisfaction or frequency of consumers' shopping experience, the stronger their endurance for the product or service, and the stronger the willingness of consumers to maintain the transaction relationship with the service provider. Wu Shuilong, Song Shuqi, Yuan Yongna et al. (2023) found that functional value, hedonic value and social value have a positive impact on customer satisfaction. In the process of purchasing cross-border beauty products, customer satisfaction is affected by perceived value, which affects consumers' continuous purchase intention. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1b: Emotional value has a positive impact on customer satisfaction.
H2b: Functional value has a positive impact on customer satisfaction.
H3b: Social value has a positive impact on customer satisfaction.
H5: Customer satisfaction has a positive impact on continuous purchase intention.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Scale Design

The questionnaire scale is based on the maturity scale of other scholars and has been appropriately modified according to the specific situation of cross-border beauty products. The questionnaire is divided into two parts, the first part is the basic information of the survey subjects and the purchase of cross-border beauty products; the second part is the measurement subject, including 6 variables and 22 questions. The Likert 7-level scale is used, and 7 means "fully agree", 4 means "neutral", and 1 means "completely disagree".

Data Collection

This questionnaire survey mainly uses QQ and WeChat platforms. In order to test the rationality of the questionnaire, a preliminary survey was conducted, and a total of 81 valid questionnaires were collected. SPSS software is used for analysis, and the reliability coefficient value is 0.935, greater than 0.9, indicating that the reliability quality of the research data is high. KMO and Bartlett tests are used to verify the validity. As shown in Table 1, the KMO value is 0.829, which is greater than 0.8, and the P-value significance level is less than 0.001. The research data is very suitable for extracting information. According to the test results of reliability and validity, the reliability and stability of the questionnaire are good, and it is suitable for further

survey. A total of 554 questionnaires are collected in this survey, of which 451 are valid, and the sample effective rate is 81.4%. As shown in Table2, since the research topic of this study focuses on cross-border beauty products, women and young people account for a large proportion of the surveyed objects. In addition, most of the respondents have a college education level or above and a medium income level, and they have the technology, knowledge and economic strength to purchase cross-border beauty products.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett Test

KMO			0.829
		Approx. Chi-square	1295.825
Bartlett		*df*	231
		P	0.000

Table 2: Basic Information of Samples

Variable		Item	Percent
Gender	Male	65	14.4%
	Female	386	85.6%
Age	Under25	202	44.8%
	26-35	158	35.0%
	36-45	65	14.4%
	Over45	26	5.8%
Education	High school or less	20	4.4%
	Junior College	128	28.4%
	Undergraduate	245	54.3%
	Master degree or above	58	12.9%
Disposable monthly income (RMB)	Under1500	40	8.9%
	1501-3000	83	18.4%
	3001-4500	139	30.8%
	4501-6000	110	24.4%
	Over6000	79	17.5%

DATA ANALYSIS

Reliability Testing

The function of reliability test is to measure the stability and reliability of the scale to ensure that the scale is reliable. In this study, SPSS software is used to process the questionnaire data, and Cronbach's α coefficient of each variable is obtained to verify the reliability of the research scale. The results are shown in Table 3. The Cronbach's α values of all latent variables are greater than 0.80, according to Nunally J.C. Cronbach's α coefficient should be greater than 0.7, which can confirm the high reliability of this scale.

Table 3: Reliability and Convergence Validity of Survey Data (n=351)

Variable	Number of Questions	CR	Cronbach's α	AVE
EV	5	0.843	0.843	0.519
FV	4	0.803	0.800	0.506
SV	4	0.813	0.813	0.522
PG	3	0.835	0.836	0.627
ST	3	0.811	0.812	0.588
CPI	3	0.814	0.811	0.595

Validity Testing

KMO and Bartlett tests were performed on the measurement items before exploratory factor analysis. As shown in Table4, KMO is 0.911, higher than the standard value of 0.8, and P-value significance level is less than 0.001, so it is suitable for factor analysis. The results of exploratory factor analysis are shown in Table5. Six factors are extracted, the eigenvalues are all greater than 1, the cumulative variance interpretation rate is 68.393%, greater than 60%, and the factor load of each item is above 0.6, greater than the standard value 0.5, indicating that the extracted factors are effective and have high interpretation power.

Table 4: KMO and Bartlett Test

KMO			0.911
		Approx. Chi-square	4710.795
	Bartlett	*df*	231
		p	0.000

Table 5: Exploratory Factor Analysis

Items	Factor Load Coefficient					
	Factor1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
EV1	0.799					
EV2	0.671					
EV3	0.665					
EV4	0.685					
EV5	0.693					
FV1		0.723				
FV2		0.714				
FV3		0.756				
FV4		0.631				
SV1			0.716			
SV2			0.727			
SV3			0.680			
SV4			0.731			
PG1				0.759		
PG2				0.731		
PG3				0.820		
ST1					0.782	
ST2					0.800	
ST3					0.794	
CPI1						0.834
CPI2						0.856
CPI3						0.633
Feature Root Value (after rotation)	3.267	2.586	0.794	2.284	2.240	2.114
Variance Interpretation Rate % (after rotation)	14.849%	11.754%	11.615%	10.382%	10.184%	9.609%
Cumulative Variance Interpretation Rate % (after rotation)	14.849%	26.603%	38.218%	48.600%	58.784%	68.393%

The confirmatory factor analysis results are shown in Table3 and Table6. The average extracted variance value (AVE) of all variables is greater than 0.5, the CR value is greater than 0.7, and the square root of AVE is greater than the correlation coefficient with other variables. It shows that it has good convergent validity and discriminative validity.

Table 6: Correlation among Constructs and the AVE Square Root

|	EV	FV	SV	PG	CS	CPI
EV	0.519					
FV	0.668	0.506				
SV	0.676	0.687	0.522			
PG	0.620	0.631	0.614	0.627		
CS	0.540	0.542	0.542	0.429	0.588	
CPI	0.407	0.412	0.405	0.530	0.461	0.595
AVE Square Root	0.720	0.711	0.722	0.792	0.767	0.771

Hypothesis Testing

In this study, Amos24.0 is also used for model fitting and hypothesis testing. The fitting results between the sample data and the theoretical model are shown in Table7, and each fitting index meets the reference value standard, indicating that the overall fitting degree between the data and the model is good.

Table 7: Model Fit Indices for the Structural Model

Model fit indices	Reference value	Value of this model
CMIN/DF	<3	2.722
RMSEA	<0.10	0.062
TLI	>0.9	0.913
IFI	>0.9	0.926
NFI	>0.8	0.888
CFI	>0.9	0.925
RFI	>0.8	0.869
PCFI	>0.5	0.793
PNFI	>0.5	0.753

The result of hypothesis testing is shown in Figure3. Although the significance of each variable is different, a total of 8 hypotheses have been verified, that is, all hypotheses are supported.
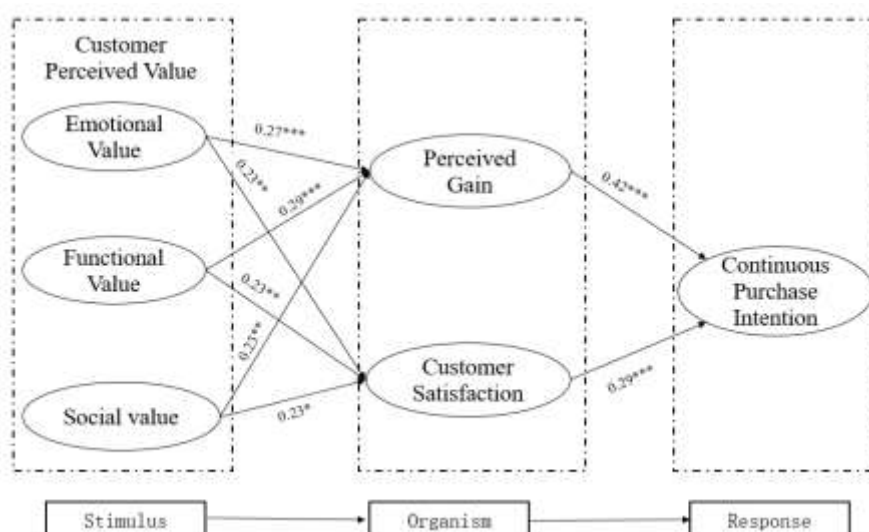
Note: (*P$<$0.05，**P$<$0.01，***P$<$0.001)
Fig 3: Structural Model

Mediation Effect
In order to have a further exploration on the influence of emotional value, functional value and social value on cross-border beauty product consumers' continuous purchase intention, Bootstrapping is used to sample repeatedly 5000 times to test the mediation effect of perceived gain and customer satisfaction in the model. This method can test several mediation effects simultaneously and test the overall mediation effect, and if the 95% confidence interval does not contain zero, the point estimate of the mediating effect is considered significant. The empirical results are shown in Table8, and the effects of all mediation path are significant. Both perceived gain and customer satisfaction play a partial mediating role between emotional value, functional value, social value and continuous purchase intention.

Table 8: Summary of Mediation Effects

Mediation Path	Total Effects	Mediation Effects	z Value	p Value	95%BootCI	Indirect Effects	Result
EV=>PG=>CPI	0.145**	0.030	1.804	0.071	0.018~0.083	0.094**	Partial Mediation
EV=>CS=>CPI	0.145**	0.021	1.465	0.143	0.010~0.066	0.094**	Partial Mediation
FV=>PG=>CPI	0.147**	0.038	2.057	0.040	0.016~0.087	0.087*	Partial Mediation
FV=>CS=>CPI	0.147**	0.023	1.585	0.113	0.006~0.063	0.087*	Partial Mediation
SV=>PG=>CPI	0.150**	0.032	2.003	0.045	0.014~0.075	0.096*	Partial Mediation
SV=>CS=>CPI	0.150**	0.022	1.588	0.112	0.005~0.059	0.096*	Partial Mediation

Note: (*: p<0.05, **: p<0.01)

DISCUSSION
In general, the external environment (perceived value) stimulates the customers, and customers make emotional response (perceived gain, satisfaction), and then customers make behavioral responses (continuous purchase of cross-border beauty products). It conforms to the SOR theoretical model. In terms of perceived gain, the impact of each perceived value gradually decrease, which is shown as following: functional value (path coefficient: 0.29***), emotional value (path coefficient: 0.27***) and social value (path coefficient: 0.23**). The reason is that with the improvement of people's quality of life, consumers care more about the function of the product, followed by emotional pleasure, and finally social value. Therefore, these dimensions have different effects on consumers' perceived gain. On the one hand, cross-border beauty products merchants or enterprises should find out what consumers expect for, pay attention to truly understand the needs of consumers, do a good job in the development of product functions, and provide products that can be truly beneficial to consumers to increase users' sense of benefit, thus increasing user stickiness. On the other hand, in the marketing process, cross-border beauty products merchants or enterprises should pay attention to the emotional needs of consumers, put themselves in the shoes of consumers, generate emotional resonance with consumers, and promote consumers to transfer into loyal consumers. In addition, cross-border beauty products merchants or enterprises in enhancing the social value and emotional value of consumers, but also to enhance the social value of consumers, so that high quality products become a booster in the social communication of consumers.

In terms of customer satisfaction, emotional value (path coefficient: 0.23 * *), functional value (path coefficient: 0.23 * *), and social value (path coefficient: 0.23 *) have almost the same impact, but the significance is slightly different. It shows that customer satisfaction, emotional value, functional value and social value all play an equally important role, and cross-border beauty products merchants or enterprises should pay attention to these three factors at the same time.

In terms of continuous purchase intention, perceived gain (path coefficient: 0.42***) has a greater impact on consumers' continuous purchase intention than customer satisfaction (path coefficient: 0.29***). Consumers will have a greater driving force to purchase when they perceive that the product brings them more benefits. Therefore, cross-border beauty product merchants or enterprises should start from the value provided by the product to make consumers feel benefited.

CONCLUSION
Based on the SOR theoretical model, this study puts forward a model of factors affecting Chinese consumers' continuous purchase of cross-border beauty products, and conducts an empirical test on the model, and the research results have well verified the theoretical model. The main conclusions are as follows: Emotional value, functional value and social value all positively affect perceived gain and customer satisfaction, and perceived gain and customer satisfaction all positively affect continuous purchase intention. The results of mediation effect test are all partial mediation effect. As with most of studies, this study is not without its limitations. First, the 451 questionnaires obtained by the survey is relatively small for cross-border beauty products consumers. Since it is a sampling survey, the research conclusion can explain the problem to a certain extent, but it may lack in reliability. Second, emotional value, functional value and social value are selected as the stimuli of

the external environment, while perceived gain and customer satisfaction are selected as the emotional response of the consumers. The research scope is limited to a certain extent. In fact, there are more possible factors affecting Chinese consumers' continuous purchase of cross-border beauty products, such as safe value, price value, quality value. Future studies can supplement and expand this study, further examine other possible determinants, hoping to get a more reliable and complete conclusion.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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