



EXTERIOR ATMOSPHERICS AND CONSUMER IMPULSE BEHAVIOUR: INFLUENCE OF WINDOW DISPLAYS

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ABSTRACT :

This study aims to fill the gap in external atmospheric literature and provide useful information to retailers by investigating the influence of external atmospheric variable specifically window displays on customers' impulse buying behaviour with respect to apparel stores. Data were gathered from 677 shoppers using mall intercept method in top seven malls across Bengaluru city. The statistical tools used for data analysis are Cronbach's α reliability test, principal component analysis, correlation and multiple linear regression analysis. The results proved that the eye catching window displays statistically predicted impulse buying tendency. The findings of the study suggest that in order to get positive reactions from the customers, apparel retailers should design attractive displays to enhance the attractiveness of the products in window displays and to induce impulse purchases.

KEYWORDS : *Atmospherics, Window display, Retailers, Impulse buying.*

INTRODUCTION:

In today's competitive retail industry it is highly difficult to reach a target segment and sell them a particular brand or product. Retailers need to pay special attention to all elements of their retail mix which includes store design and atmospherics. Store exteriors are what customers first encounter as they engage in shopping behavior and thus are an important opportunity for stores to build positive impressions. Store windows are among the first things shoppers notice when they walk or drive by the store and thus they are the ideal place to capture shoppers' attention (Santos M., Rose displays). Retailers are recognizing the importance of window displays as the first point of contact between the store and the customer and a chance to create the most critical first impression on the customer. They define the store and give an idea of what the store is all about to the customer. They determine whether the customer will walk into the store or walk away from it. They are the effective tools to be used when the image of the store needs to be changed. Window displays can be used as a means to portray seasonal merchandise. Window displays can convey what age group or income group of customers the store caters to. If done properly, window displays can attract more customers than a television advertisement or a hoarding. Moreover, they can attract the right kind of customers to the store. In other words, window displays act as a filter. Only those customers enter the store that have a fair idea of what products it stocks and the one who are interested in buying them. A lot of time and energy of the salesmen is saved as they need not concentrate on customers who might not be potential buyers.

Window displays make the decision making process of the customer rather simple. Based on the window displays, the customer can easily decide whether he wants to enter the store or not. Hence, window displays also help the customer by preventing unnecessary consumption of energy and time. There is no substantive evidence to indicate that window displays lead to an increase in the sales. However, a number of

cases have been noted wherein customers have undertaken impulse buying under the influence of attractive window displays (www.fibre2fashion.com).

Creativity plays a very important role in window dressing. The window display designer should design the window in the best way possible within the budget fixed for the same by the retailer. Retailers in developed countries spend large amounts on window displays, but Indian retailers lag behind in this respect. With a well-designed graphics program, they can truly live up to their promise as windows of opportunity to help bring customers into the store and drive sales (Santos M., Rose displays).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The window display is an important criterion of visual merchandising as it creates a first impression of the store (Mehta and Chugan, 2012 and 2013) and it attracts the customers to enter into the store (Bakarne, 2008). Like a window display, store front also is the entry point of the customers which helps them decide whether to enter the store or not. So the arrangement of the merchandise in the storefront should be impressive and it should motivate customers to enter (Schneider, et al, 2009). Window display, according to the findings of Lea-Greenwood (1998), is a vitally important visual communication tool used in retailing. Edwards and Shackley (1992) reported that sales increase when window displays are used, particularly for new products, and well-known brands need effective elements of a window display.

The windows are the first look a customer gets before they come into a store (Klokis, 1986). As an important component of the retail mix (Edwards and Shackley, 1992), window displays are used to communicate information about the store, its products, and services (Sen et al., 2002). From window displays, potential customers gather information used to help make decisions about whether to shop at a particular store. Window displays help identify the type of store and its offerings to customers who may be unfamiliar with the retailer (Berman and Evans, 1998) and thus are expected to be an important store atmospheric cue for small independent retailers. Window displays are also one of the exterior elements that retailers have direct control over what they display. Window displays congruent with the consumers' self-image were found to be more successful in attracting customers; window displays were less successful when they only contained promotional or style information (Sen et al., 2002). After conducting interviews with shoppers Edwards and Shackley (1992) found that larger window displays were more successful in attracting consumers' attention compared to smaller windows since there were more design elements to take in. They also found that sales increased when stores used window displays compared to no window display. Successful window displays were found to be aesthetically pleasing, contained a theme, used warm colours, drew customers into the scene with the use of perspective, used lighting to highlight key areas of the display, and incorporated accessories associated with the products. Their findings further showed that when new products were displayed in windows sales increased.

Jain *et al.* (2014) carried out a study to investigate the effects of show windows on shopping behaviour among female consumers. They identified five main factors that shape consumers' experiences of show windows: social, informational, hedonic, image and feel-good factors. The study showed quantitatively that these factors influence female consumers' purchase intentions. Their study suggests that, by making consumers "feel good", show windows can positively affect consumers' purchase intentions. In particular, even though females tend to find shopping pleasing and relaxing in any case (Jain *et al.*, 2012), their shopping behaviour can be further enhanced by environmental cues such as show windows.

The design of a store window comprises several elements. One key element is colour, which can contribute towards creating a certain mood or theme and potentially gear customers towards making a purchase (Morgan, 2010). For example, on Valentine's Day, a show window might be decorated in red and pink, encouraging shoppers to buy Valentine's Day gifts. Show window colour schemes should be selected with caution, as different colours have different effects on consumers' mindsets, and consumers from diverse cultures might even interpret the same colour in different ways. Consumers may also be sensitive to the use of natural vs. unnatural colours in window displays (Diamond and Diamond, 2007). Lighting is another

important means of influencing consumers' mood and enhancing the appearance of products displayed in a show window. Computer software can be used to adjust the brightness of the show windows according to the time of day (Opris, and Bratucu, 2013). Additional elements incorporated into show windows include mannequins, graphics and photography and background props or scenery. These elements can be used to create short stories or messages, which engage consumers, for example, by surprising or amusing them. Some stores use multiple show windows to tell a continuous story, thereby increasing consumer engagement and encouraging them to spend time in the vicinity of the store. This may lead them to step inside and acquire products. Furthermore, these elements also enable show windows to portray fashion trends and to demonstrate how products might be used. Selection of elements in a show window might be influenced by consumers, competitors or industry experts (Opris, and Bratucu, 2013). A show window display is key to a retailer's communication strategy (Chain Store Age Executive, 1989), as it determines customers' first impressions of the brand at the retail location and influences their decisions to enter the store, as well as their liking of the store (Lague, 1989). Thus, a show window should be designed such that it conveys the specific, nuanced image that the store wants to display (Doonan, 1998). As Turley and Milliman (2000) noted, marketing researchers have mostly concentrated on the inside of a store. This research triggers additional contributions from the outside of a store.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

This research addresses the gap in the extant literature by studying the influence of window displays on the customers' impulse buying tendency among youth. Therefore, hypothesis was framed to examine the association between customers' impulse buying tendency (dependent variable) and the window displays in the store (independent variables).

H₁: Window displays influence and increase the customers' impulse buying tendency.

H₀: Window displays does not influence and increase the customers' impulse buying tendency.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A structured questionnaire was developed to gather the primary data. The first part of the questionnaire measured demographics (age, gender, occupation, marital status, educational qualification and individual monthly income) of the respondents. Section 1 contained 7 scale items to measure the impulse buying tendency (dependent variable) and section 2 contained 8 scale items to measure influence of window displays (independent variable) and the responses were measured using a five point Likert scale.

The survey was administered using a mall intercept method to collect the data in top seven malls ranked on the basis of number of visitors of Bangalore city over a period of one month. Thus the sampling methods are convenient and judgement sampling. More than 800 shoppers were contacted, but only 700 shoppers cooperated and out of 700 filled questionnaires, 677 questionnaires were applicable for analysis. Remaining 23 questionnaires were discarded as they were incomplete and illegible.

Descriptive statistics were carried out for demographics and the scale items (dependent and independent variables). Exploratory factor analyses with Varimax rotation were used for multi-item scales. Items with factor loadings of at least 0.5 were retained to ensure the presence of reliable items (Nunnally, 1978). To test the hypotheses correlation and multiple regression analysis were used.

Results

Descriptive statistics for the sample of customers can be found in table-1, providing information regarding the respondents' demographic profile, such as age, gender, occupation, marital status, educational qualification and individual income per month.

Table-1: Descriptive statistics for demographics of the customers

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	16 – 20 years	165	24.4
	21 – 25 years	366	54.1
	26 – 30 years	126	18.6
	31 – 35 years	20	2.9
	Total	677	100.0
Gender	Male	357	52.7
	Female	320	47.3
	Total	677	100.0
Occupation	Employed	285	42.1
	Unemployed	45	6.6
	Professional	29	4.3
	Business/others	13	1.9
	Student	305	45.1
	Total	677	100.0
Marital Status	Single	591	87.3
	Married	86	12.7
	Total	677	100.0
Educational Qualification	Intermediate	226	33.4
	Graduation	231	34.1
	Post-Graduation	203	30.0
	Other	17	2.5
	Total	677	100
Income	Below Rs. 10,000	52	7.7
	Rs.10, 000- 25,000	178	26.3
	Rs.26,000- 50,000	86	12.7
	Rs.51, 000 and above	37	5.5
	Dependent on parents' / others' income	324	47.8
	Total	677	100

The respondents in the age group of 21-25 years constituted the majority of the sample (54.1%). Since majority of customers shopping for apparels in organized retail outlets are college students and young working professionals, the researcher encountered more respondents in the age range of 21-25 years. Younger respondents are chosen for this study because they are more likely to make impulse purchases than aged when it comes to fashion or apparel products. They are the potential customers with increasing spending power, much of which is spent on their wardrobe and fashionable apparel plays a significant role in their daily lives. Almost one half (52.7%) of the respondents were male and the other half (47.3%) were female customers. The gender uniformity has been taken into account in order not to affect the result in a negative way, favouring one gender over the other. The impact of occupational status on the impulse buying tendency and influence of window displays is worth exploring. In the above analysis, the majority of respondents were students, as expected (45.1%). As young customers ranging from 16 to 35 years old were selected for the survey majority (87.3%) of them were single. The overall majority of the respondents were educated. Almost one-half (47.8%) of the respondents were dependent on either parents' or others' income, as young customers (students) were chosen for the study.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR VARIABLES

Since responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, which ranged from never=1 to frequently=5, a respondent scoring above three (3) on this scale in section-1 and 2 could be considered to support the variables (i.e., customers’ impulse buying tendency and influence of window displays on impulse buying behaviour). The descriptive statistics for each variable is shown in table-2.

The mean score (3.03) for the first section of the survey, measuring customers’ impulse buying tendency, suggested respondents tended to purchase on impulse. Section-2 measured influence of window displays on customers’ impulse buying behaviour. As long as customers were aware of the influences on their buying decision from their recent shopping experience, it appeared that they tended to be influenced by window display (mean score of 3.18).

Table-2: Descriptive statistics for variables

Particulars	Number of cases	Mean	S.D.
Section-1: Impulse Buying Tendency	677	3.03	0.631
1. I go shopping to change my mood.	677	2.67	1.180
2. I buy things spontaneously.	677	2.91	1.121
3. I feel a sense of excitement when I make an impulse purchase.	677	3.12	1.169
4. After I make an impulse purchase I regret.	677	2.51	1.266
5. I have difficulty controlling my urge of buying when I see a good offer.	677	3.15	1.215
6. When I see a good deal, I tend to buy more than what I intended to buy.	677	3.33	1.203
7. I carefully plan most of my purchases.	677	3.54	1.407
Section-2: Influence of Window Display	677	3.18	0.583
1. I tend to enter a store when I am attracted by an eye-catching window display.	677	3.06	1.335
2. I feel compelled to enter the store when I see an interesting window display.	677	2.93	1.222
3. I tend to choose the store to shop in depending on eye-catching window display.	677	2.88	1.252
4. I tend to buy the clothing which is on window display.	677	2.97	1.178
5. A store’s window display helps me to know the latest fashion trends	677	3.78	0.844
6. I usually look at window displays to see what brands the store carries	677	3.13	0.941
7. I use window displays to get a general impression of the store	677	3.16	1.037
8. Before entering a store, I usually check out its window displays	677	3.52	1.067

RELIABILITY TEST:

The questionnaire for customers was subjected to reliability test using Cronbach’s alpha. A reliability test of 7 items in the impulse buying scale indicated that discarding item 4 (After I make an impulse purchase I regret) and 7 (I carefully plan most of my purchases) would improve the overall reliability from 0.538 to 0.665. Thus, both items were removed and only five items were retained for use in analysis. The reliability test for 8 scale items of influence of window display on impulse buying indicated that discarding item 7 (I use window displays to get a general impression of the store) and 8 (Before entering a store, I usually check out its window displays) would improve the overall reliability from 0.616 to 0.640. Thus, both items were

removed and only six items were retained for use in analysis. An analysis of table-3 brings out that the items of both the scales have an acceptable level of internal consistency (given the thumb rule of $0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$).

Table-3: Reliability Test

Test#	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Impulse Buying	5	0.665
Influence of Window Displays on impulse buying	6	0.640

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure (KMO) was 0.687 indicating that the data were sufficient for factor analysis. The Bartlett’s test of sphericity $\chi^2 (15) = 653.088$, $p < 0.000$ showed that there were patterned relationships between the items (Table-4).

Table-4: KMO and Bartlett's test for factors influencing impulse buying

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.687
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	653.088
	df	15
	Sig.	0.000

Exploratory Factor Analysis:

EFA was the most appropriate method to identify the quality domains and pertinent correlated attributes. Using principal component analysis and Varimax with Kaiser Normalization rotation method, factor analysis of the 6 items of the scale measuring influence of window displays was done. The factor solution emerged and the rotated factor matrix has been obtained. It resulted into two factors covering 59.53 percent of variability and the eigen values for both the factors were above 1.0 as shown in table-5. The table-6 shows the factor loadings after rotation using a significant factor criterion of 0.5. The rotated component matrix indicates a clearer separation.

Table-5: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
Influence of Eye-catching Window Display	2.19	36.53	36.53	2.19	36.53	36.53	2.14	35.59	35.59
Influence of Informative Window Display	1.38	23.00	59.53	1.38	23.00	59.53	1.44	23.94	59.53

First factor comprises of four items with eigen value of 2.14 accounting for 35.59% of total variance. Since all the four items are pertaining to attractive window displays, it can be labelled as **“Influence of Eye-catching Window Display”**. Second factor with eigen value of 1.44 accounting for 23.94% total variance is again grouping of 2 items and as both the items are regarding the informative window displays, it is labelled as **“Influence of Informative Window Display”**.

Table-6: Rotated Component Matrix

Items(Influence of Window Display on impulse buying)	Component	
	1	2
I tend to choose the store to shop in depending on eye-catching window display	0.780	
I feel compelled to enter the store when I see an interesting window display	0.811	
I tend to enter a store when I am attracted by an eye-catching window display	0.773	
I tend to buy the clothing which is on window display	0.514	
A store's window display helps me to know the latest fashion trends		0.832
I usually look at the window displays to see what brands the store carries		0.838

Pearson Correlation Test:

A Pearson correlation test was conducted among the variables in order to see whether the Window Displays were correlated with the customers' impulse buying tendency. Table-7 summarizes correlations between the dependent variable (i.e. Impulse buying tendency) and the independent variables (i.e. Influence of eye catching and informative window displays).

Table-7: Correlation between Impulse Buying and Window Displays

Window displays	Coefficient (r)	Significance (p)
Eye Catching Window Displays	0.411**	0.000
Informative Window Displays	0.078*	0.042

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The eye catching window display was found to be statistically correlated with impulse buying behavior with p-values smaller than an alpha level of 0.01. It implies that, with 99% of confidence it is correlated with a customer impulse buying tendency. The informative window display has a p-value of 0.042 which is less than 0.05. It can be concluded that the informative window display is correlated with the customers' impulse buying tendency at 5% level of significance. It is observed that the strongest correlation was between impulse buying tendency and eye catching window display with a correlation of 0.411.

Multiple Regression Analysis:

A multiple linear regression was run on the data to study the influence of window displays on impulse buying tendency. The influence of eye-catching window displays and informative window displays, were entered into the regression model as independent variables and customers' impulse buying tendency as the dependent variable.

Table-8: Model summary of regression analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.412	0.170	0.167	0.70277

Predictors: (Constant), Influence of Informative and Eye Catching Window Displays

The *multiple correlation coefficient (R)* is considered to be one measure of the quality of the prediction of the impulse buying tendency. A value of 0.412 indicates a good level of prediction. The R^2 value is (coefficient of determination) 0.170 which indicates that the two independent variables explain 17 % of the variability of the dependent variable, impulse buying tendency (table-8).

Table-9: ANOVA results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	68.136	2	34.068	68.980	0.000
	Residual	332.876	674	0.494		
	Total	401.012	676			

Dependent Variable: Impulse Buying Tendency

Predictors: (Constant), Influence of Informative and Eye Catching Window Displays

The *F*-ratio in the **ANOVA** table-9 tests whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data. The overall model was significant. The table shows that the independent variables statistically significantly predict the dependent variable, $F(2, 674) = 68.980, p < .0005$ (i.e., the regression model is a good fit of the data).

Table-10: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.912	0.147		13.035	0.000
	Influence of Eye Catching Window Display	0.346	0.030	0.408	11.533	0.000
	Influence of Informative Window Display	0.029	0.036	0.028	0.800	0.424

Dependent Variable: Impulse Buying Tendency

Statistical significance of the independent variables:

Table-10 shows the beta coefficients and p-values provided by the standard multiple regression test. As seen in the table, the eye catching window display make the largest unique contribution in explaining the dependent variable, i.e. impulse buying tendency with respective standardized beta coefficients of 0.408 with p-value less than alpha level 0.05. The p-value of the informative window display is greater than 0.05, and thus not making a significant unique contribution to the prediction of the dependent variable, i.e. there is no significant directional relationship between informative window display and impulse buying behavior.

Table-11: Result of regression analysis

	df	R ²	F	β	t	Sig.
Dependent Variable: Impulse Buying Tendency	674	0.170	68.980			0.000
Eye Catching Window Display				0.408	11.533	0.000
Informative Window Display				0.028	0.800	0.424

The results of multiple regression analysis are shown in table-11. It is revealed that, the eye catching window displays statistically significantly predicted impulse buying tendency. The informative window displays did not add significantly in predicting the dependent variable ($p > 0.05$).

Estimated model coefficients:

The general form of the equation to predict impulse buying tendency from eye catching window display is:

Predicted impulse buying tendency = $1.912 + (0.346 \times \text{eye catching window display})$.

Hypotheses testing for influence of window displays on impulse buying behavior:

Factor analysis results into two hypotheses as shown below. The following hypotheses are analyzed using a Pearson correlation test and a standard multiple regression analysis.

H₁: Eye catching window displays influence and increase the customers' impulse buying tendency.

Hypothesis 1 aimed to discover whether there was a significant relationship and correlation between customers' impulse buying tendency and eye catching window displays. It also aimed at finding out whether this visual merchandising technique enhanced the impulse buying tendency.

According to the Pearson correlation test (table-7), a significant correlation ($r=0.411$) was found between impulse buying tendency and eye catching window displays with a p-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.01, i.e. the null hypothesis is rejected. In other words, given a p-value smaller than alpha-level of 0.01, the data allowed the researcher to say with 99% of confidence that eye catching window displays were significantly associated with the customers' impulse buying tendency, supporting the researcher's hypothesis. Moreover, the standard regression analysis results (table-11) have shown that eye catching window displays significantly influenced customers' impulse buying tendency. The p-value ($p < 0.001$) being smaller than the level of alpha 0.05, the data provided sufficient evidence that there was a significant relationship between impulse buying tendency and eye catching window displays. There is a directional relationship between the two analyzed variables. Eye catching window displays make unique contributions in the prediction of the dependent variable, i.e. young customers' impulse buying tendency. Therefore the hypothesis is supported by these findings.

H₂: Informative window displays influence and increase the customers' impulse buying tendency.

Hypothesis 2 planned to find out whether there was a significant relationship (correlation) between the customers' impulse buying tendency and the informative window displays in stores.

As shown in table-7, there is a significant correlation of 0.078 between impulse buying behavior and informative window displays with a p-value of 0.042 which is less than 0.05, i.e. the null hypothesis is rejected. In other words, given a p-value smaller than an alpha level of 0.05, it is claimed with 95% of confidence that informative window displays are significantly correlated with the impulse buying tendency. However, the p-value from the standard regression analysis table-11 ($p=0.424$) was greater than alpha level of 0.05 and hence the null hypothesis is accepted. This suggests that there is no significant directional relationship between the impulse buying tendency and informative window displays even though a significant correlation was found between impulse buying tendency and informative window displays. The data didn't provide sufficient evidence supporting the relationship between these two variables and didn't permit to predict the dependent variable. Therefore, this stated hypothesis hasn't been supported.

DISCUSSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The concept of how store windows influence store traffics has received little attention in past studies. With the purpose of answering the question of why consumers choose to enter some retail stores and how they make impulse purchases, the researcher investigated how store window displays affect these decisions of the consumers. By testing hypotheses and through discussion of the analytical results, the researcher examined the possible impact window displays on young customers' impulse buying tendency in malls. The research results evidenced that there were statistically significant relationship between customers' impulse buying tendency and the eye catching window displays. A key finding of this study was that window displays generally function to increase attention to the store or generate unplanned store visits. The findings of the present study can be helpful to many stakeholders, including retail managers, store designers, brand managers and marketing managers. This implies that all stakeholders have to work as a team to create an effective window displays that achieve the goals of the store and of the brands it offers. Windows are among the first things shoppers see when they walk or drive by the store, so they are the ideal

place to capture shoppers' attention. The store designers should be very creative in designing the window displays of the store as they are the first point of contact between the store and the customer and a chance to create the most critical first impression of the customer. The retailers must change displays regularly to promote new stock and keep customers' interest alive. In malls it is required to redesign the windows every week because the customers flock to the stores on the weekends. Mannequins must be kept in the window and draped according to the predefined theme which must be maintained throughout the display. They must use appropriate lighting as it brings life to window and is the finishing touch. Use large graphics which will be seen clearly from the street when a special offer is to be promoted to attract the attention of the passer-by. Finally, if retailers can incorporate these elements into a store window, they might succeed in attracting consumers to the store and thus increasing the likelihood that window shopper will make a purchase.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research has few limitations which need to be emphasized. The findings of this research are mall specific and thus may not represent the general population of the shoppers. The data were gathered in selected shopping malls in Bengaluru and hence sample was geographically restricted. The sample chosen are in the age group of 16-35 years and thus respondents with all age groups and a different geographical area may produce varied results. Thus, future research could be conducted with other demographic and geographic profile which helps in thorough analysis of the concept and enhance the generalizability of the findings. The study has mainly focused on apparel category and thus generalizations cannot be made for other product categories. The present study can be extended in numerous ways by the future research. This study focused on the window display as a complete entity. Future studies might explore individual environmental cues in window displays, such as color, lighting, theme, or graphics. They might also investigate specific characteristics of window displays in different product categories, such as jewellery, accessories, shoes and books. In addition, the present study focuses on impulse buying; future studies might explore the purchase intentions or post-purchase behavior of the customers. Another potential avenue for future research is to explore how window displays work together with the retailer's other contact points such as in-store displays to convey brand concepts, generate positive feelings about the products and to enhance the shopping experience.

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