

Travelers' Perception with Reference to Indian Domestic Airlines.

Anupama Tadararla, Mallika Srivastava, Sandip Solanki



Abstract: The foundation of this research is that cost is not the only determining factor in the selection of a specific airline. Quality of service and satisfaction of customers are also essential tools for evaluating the customers' preference when the airfares between the airlines are marginal. This research also aims to define best practices in quality prevalent in the domestic civil aviation sector in India and based on the results; suggestions are given to quality improvement dimensions for the Indian Airlines. Quantitative research analysis is carried with structural equation model to draw the conclusions. The quality service practices identified by the study will benefit the domestic airlines to improve their overall customer value and thereby customer loyalty and profitability. The study is confined to only domestic airlines and the data collection was conducted only in Pune.

Key Words: Service quality, Domestic Airlines, Private Airlines, Principal component Analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

The transport system is the backbone of any economy; they play an essential role of any country in its growth and progress. A vital role in the development and advancement of any nation. As stated in the Indian Aerospace Analysis report, India stands at ninth position in the list of the world's largest aviation industry. As per a report by The International Air Transport Association, India is expected to turn into the third biggest aviation market by 2024. (Source: The International Air Transport Association (IATA) Press Release No.:57 on 16 October 2014) The Indian Airline industry has turned into the most vital section in the financial improvement of our country also one of the quickest developing segments. Pre Liberalization of Indian Economy 1991, Public airlines in India had dominated business and hence could direct its terms to its customers who have no other choice yet to acknowledge whatever has been accessible irrespective of the quality of service, pricing, hospitality, and comfort. The situation has changed post globalization as this sector was available to national because multinational investors have shown interest in investing; as a result,

events have moved quickly as an ever-increasing number of new players entered, with the advantages of being new players when compared with the carriers which have been in active since freedom. In 2003 the presentation of another sort of aircraft service called Low cost carriers (LCCs) or no-frills air service via Air Deccan, revived India's Civil Aviation sector. Challenge in the domestic airline's showcases in India is getting to be extreme as the clients' needs and wants are rising in variety.

It is basic that low-cost carriers' measure and screen service quality and customer satisfaction. The speed and power of progress in service quality contributions have quickened as of late inside the low cost carrier industry (Atilgan et al., 2008). Traveler Growth from DGCA Reports expressed that Passengers conveyed by domestic carriers amid Jan-Dec 2018 were 1389.76 lakhs as against 1171.76 lakhs amid the relating time of the previous year enlisting a growth of 18.60%. Table 1 showed an overall scenario of the domestic air travelers and the number of complaints received.

Table 1 Domestic airline complaints year wise.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Jan		1197	823	877	694	917
Feb		1092	759	810	642	983
March		1194	737	680	657	
April		935	674	643	706	
May		858	782	716	724	
June	900	819	788	631	677	
July	581	802	948	678	714	
Aug	712	770	885	599	668	
Sept	750	710	728	606	669	
Oct	1080	727	790	656	669	
Nov	933	857	951	716	786	
Dec	1322	1091	907	681	803	
Total	6278	11052	9772	8293	8409	1900

Source –DGCA Report

In reducing the complaints of quality service to clients is essential for domestic carriers' survival, so domestic carriers need to comprehend what travelers anticipate from their services. Service quality is a standout amongst the best models for assessing the client's expectations and perception. Service quality is a composite of different connections among clients and airlines, with employees looking to impact clients' conclusions and the image of the airlines (Gursoy et al., 2005; Ishaq, 2012). Service quality impacts a low-cost carrier's upper hand by holding client support, and with this comes to market share. Service quality is a proportion of how well the service level conveyed matches client desires. Giving quality Service implies complying with client service reliably (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

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In 1988 Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry built up a conventional instrument called SERVQUAL to gauge service quality dependent on the contribution from a focus group. It comprises of five factors (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) and contains a two-section, 22 scale items concerning expectations and performance. These five components have been tried through various observational investigations in such different businesses by numerous researchers (An and Noh, 2009) that it is utilized in many diversified organizations.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ariffin et al. (2010) uncovered that caring and tangibility was the primary measurement that helped explained travelers' satisfaction for low-cost carriers. Malaysian Airlines is well known in terms of tangible services, key service, reputation and staff. Aydin and Yildirim (2012) found that there was a unique connection between air carrier preference and carrier services preference. Riandarini et al. (2015) demonstrated that there were contrasts in causality between client loyalty models of FSA (Full Service Air Lines) with LFA (Low Fare Airlines. Quality of service affected Satisfaction with the effect on prices and the immediate impact on the picture Quality of service by satisfaction was greater than its indirect impact FSA discovered that consumer satisfaction did not boost allegiance and consumer satisfaction, the reverse impact of LFA on traveler loyalty. Johan et al. (2014) found that perceived quality had a significant positive association with customer loyalty and influenced customer loyalty by a enormous variable.

Mahmud et al. (2013) inferred when clients felt satisfied then yes they would likewise have a flight service sector allegiance. His research additionally prescribed that the flight services industries to keep up steady service quality and keep on setting the correct price and fair, at that point the clients would feel happy and be loyal to the airline sector services. Zangmo et al. (2014) found that among the five SERVQUAL measurements, travelers were most satisfied with the 'assurance' with 'reliability' and least variable being 'quality'. Clients become exceptionally fussy in the determination of air carriers since they realize how an amount paid their well-deserved cash and plan their journeys, by investigating every one of the potential outcomes to get the excellent bargain, and traveler need to ensure each cent spent is justified, despite all the trouble and get the unbeatable. When the question arise the need for the research is with the increase of travelers need does the airline industry is able to meet the expectations, of the customer. Are air travelers are satisfied with the airline services and does the satisfied air passengers travel with the same airlines? This research will fill the gap by finding how domestic airlines need to develop strategies to sustain in the competitive industry. The hypotheses of the study are: SERVQUAL in the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality Ahmed et al. (2010) conducted a mediation of customer satisfaction link between service quality and repurchase intentions, with the five dimensions of SERVQUAL model (tangible, responsive, empathy, assurance and reliability) by Parasuraman et al. to evaluate service quality.

III. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

A. RESEARCH DESIGN

In this research, the factors incorporate (tangibles, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and reliability). Under the quantitative research approach, the researcher chose a descriptive study as an exploration reason.

INSTRUMENT

Nyeck et al. (2002), justifies that SERVQUAL measuring tool "is a complete attempt at conceptualizing and measuring the quality of service" it that it has quite several benefits.

In several service industries, including the airline industry, Fick and Ritchie (1991) evaluated perceived service quality.

C. QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

The questionnaire consisted of three parts, i.e. Part I is designed to obtain information on the socioeconomics of the respondent. Part II is intended to assess the perception of the respondent given the 22-state SERVQUAL questionnaire; it is intended or intended to assess the quality of airline service. Passenger satisfaction and buying intentions are estimated in Part III. The factors are taken from previous research (Park et al., 2008; Park, J.W, 2007, Huang, 2009). On the 5 point Likert scale, Part

II and Part III estimated from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. As proposed by Prayag (2007), a five-point Likert scale was used to decrease the frustration of participants and boost response rate and quality. Before the actual survey of the study, a pre-trial of the survey is conducted. Then the structured questionnaire is used for surveying gathering of information.

D. SAMPLING DESIGN

In the current research nonrandom - sampling techniques are used. Since it is not possible to obtain databases from each of the airlines. A convenience and purposive sampling method are used to collect the information. The sample includes individuals who live in Pune just as outside Pune; however regular customers of the Indian domestic airlines.

E. DATA COLLECTION

Information and data were gathered from 242 national carriers' passengers. The time of study covers one year from 2017 to 2018. The technique of data gathering was Personal interview.

F. FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS (TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES)

Reliability in terms of consistency of the outcomes got from instruments utilized in the fact finding. Reliability is an evaluation of the degree of consistency between different variable measurements (Pallant, 2004). Validity is the degree to which a measure accurately speaks what it is supposed to (Hair *et al.*, 2007).

Validity determines the degree to which a variable of interest is estimated by a scale. Cronbach's is used to assess the entire scale's internal consistency. Reliability scores greater than 0.70 are acceptable according to Pallant (2004). Descriptive statistics gave better comprehend about the socio-economic profile of participants and test the understanding dimension of the respondent towards customer satisfaction, Customer service, service perceived, and service expected and client buying intent. To examine the demographic characteristics of customers of domestic carriers, the frequency and percentage analysis is worked out.

Weighted averages as a measure of central tendency (Cooper & Schindler 2006: 345) for the significant scores is done out to locate the most influential factor in choosing the airlines. The association between socio-demographic characteristics of clients and the inclination towards domestic carriers, a Chi-square test was utilized. The correlation and regression analysis are completed to inspect the interconnection between customer satisfaction, Customer service, service perceived, service expected, and customer buying intentions of domestic carriers. To investigate the difference between socio-economic characteristics of customers and factors affecting inclination of domestic carriers, the distinction between socio-economic attributes of customers and their expectation regarding services of domestic carriers Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test is used Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was utilized to test the conceptual model fit. To clarify the contribution of each indicator, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) (Joreskog and Sorbom 1996) is used. SEM (Structural Equation Model) gives facilities Unweight Least Square (UL) to decide each indicator's performance or contribution in explaining latent factors SEM is used to determine the structural connection between the perceived quality of service, satisfaction, and behavioral intent of the passengers.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The reliability of the questionnaire explains Reliability 0.526 Responsiveness 0.926 Assurance 0.953 Empathy 0.970 Tangibility 0.857 Customer Satisfaction 0.936 Behavioral Intentions 0.851 and Overall 0.966. It alludes to the degree of inter-correlation between items. Internal consistency Shows that countless items measure a Comparable structure and interrelate with each other. By comparison, low interitem correlation shows that some products are not taken from the relevant domain and are unreliable (Churchill, 1979). Cronbach's alpha is the usually accepted metric of internal consistency. Alpha's estimated value is .70 as the minimum acceptable standard for inner consistency (Kennedy et al., 2002).

In addition, when measuring attitudes, it is acceptable that the alpha score is 0.50 and above (Chandon, Pierre-Yves & Philippe, 1996). Guilford (1958) also proposed that the minimum acceptable reliability level would be 0.3.

While numerically testing normality in SPSS, Skewness, and Kurtosis are some of the simplest trials (Maria, 1970) and according to the thumb rule, the information becomes normal when their Skewness and Kurtosis have a value between -1 and +1 or more like zero (Gao et al., 2008).

skewness and kurtosis tests and the value of skewness conducted is between -.885 and Kurtosis is -.518, which is dependable as per guideline between -1 to +1. This demonstrates that data is normally distributed except for one statement. The airline has Modern equipment and interior, i.e., 1.110. Out of 242 respondents, 60.3% are male, and the remaining 39.7% are female. More than half respondents, i.e. 61% belong to the age group of fewer than 40 years, 15.7% belong to the age group of 40 to 60 years whereas only 13.2% are more than 60 and above respectively. 33.9% of the respondents are graduates, 36.4% are postgraduates and remaining are undergraduates and others which are not very significant portion of the overall sample. Majority of the respondents are either students (25.6%) or employees

(39.6%). Only 17.3% have their own business, and the remaining is retired or has any other occupation. 67% of the respondents belong to the income group below Rs.75, 000 and remaining are above the group mentioned. Most of the respondents prefer Indigo (30.5%) followed by Jet Airways (17.3%) and Air India (14%). Indigo is chosen widely because of its attractive price deals. 30.6 % of respondents mentioned that they know about the company from online advertisement whereas 33.4% said from friend/peer group. 69% Replied that they prefer economy class whereas remaining preferred business class and no such preference. 36.7% mentioned that they book tickets through airline website directly whereas 34.2% book their tickets through other sites such as makemytrip.com, Goibibo.com, Yatra.com. 76% of the respondents say that they decide their carrier/airlines. Almost half of them the price is the most significant factor for purchase decision whereas, for 23.5% and 27.5% of respondents their purchasing decision depends upon quality, service provided respectively. The satisfied traveler must have received perceptions equal to or more than expected. So the hypothesized value of the study is 3. The T-test divides the satisfied and unsatisfied customers into all the items that are considered the null hypothesis is rejected as calculated values are greater than the critical values, and the p-value is less than 0.05 except the statements Airline staff provides services as promised .806. Employees perform these services correctly the first time. 2.85 Airline maintain error-free records 0.805. Airline staff is courteous. 5.53. My overall experience with this airline has been great. 2.65. For finding whether the buying is explained by rest of the variables a regression is carried out by the model $BI = f \{TAN, REL, RES, ASU, EMP, ST\}$. The regression analysis results indicate that 90.9 % the variations observed in buying intention ($R^2 = 0.826$) is explained by tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, satisfaction for the buying intentions. Thus, tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, satisfaction Positive association with variables influencing future intentions of travelers to fly with the airlines. F-value (ANOVA) is 186.2 of Statistics used to evaluate the model's significance. In this study, the result of the probability of the F statistics gives 0.000 which means that the model is significant statistically at 1%. Durbin Watson provides a value of 2.11 ; which is no further than the 2 benchmark, this means that the model has no serial or auto correlation between the residuals. Results show overall model is significant, but under the individual factors, empathy is showing significant where the P-value is less than 0.05, the remaining factors show no significance when tested individually. Multicollinearity is also checked between all the latent constructs viz., tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, satisfaction to eliminate high inter-construct correlation. Predicted that tolerance is must be greater than .10 and the variance inflation factor (VIF) is less than 10 in all the cases, suggesting that multicollinearity is not an issue. But the results show that intolerance 0.087 (Assurance) and 0.081 (Empathy) which is less than 0.1. And in VIF which shows 11.507 (Assurance) which shows that multicollinearity exists, which is the factor that can be considered that second-order CFA can be constructed.

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For the second model in regression explains that $ST = f\{TAN, REL, RES, ASU, EMP\}$ the regression analysis results indicate that 92.7 % of the observed variations in satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.859$) is explained by tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance for the Satisfaction. Thus, tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance positively associated with factors and customer satisfaction that makes them fly with the airways. F-value (ANOVA) is 286.59 of Statistics used to evaluate the model's significance. In this research, the outcome of the F statistics is 0.000, meaning that the model is statistically significant at 1%. Durbin Watson provides a value of 1.93 ; not farther than the 2 benchmark, this means there is no serial or auto correlation between the residuals in the model. Though overall models are significant but under the individual factors empathy and responsiveness are showing significant where the p-value is less than 0.05, the rest of the variables are showing no significance when tested individually. Multicollinearity is also checked between all the latent constructs viz., tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, satisfaction to eliminate high inter-construct correlation. As tolerance is must be higher than .10 and the variance = inflation factor (VIF) is less than 10 in all the cases, suggesting that multicollinearity is not an issue. But the results show that in tolerance 0.087 (Assurance) which is less than 0.1. And in VIF which shows 11.87 (Assurance) which shows that multicollinearity exists. For the third regression model $BI = f\{ST\}$ The regression analysis indicates that 84.7% of the observed variations in satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.717$) is explained by customer satisfaction for the Buying or traveling intent of the respondent. Thus, traveler satisfaction is positively associated with factors of buying or going intent them fly with the airways. F-value (ANOVA) is 608.5 of statistics which is used to measure the overall significance of the model. In this research, the outcome of the F statistics likelihood is 0.000, meaning that the model is statistically significant though the overall model is significant under the individual factor customer satisfaction is also showing significant where the p-value is less than 0.05. Some results under the ANOVA indicate that the F-value of 2.032 is statistically significant indicating that there is a significant difference between satisfaction and preference of airlines. The F-value of 2.324 is statistically significant referring to an important distinction between Buying/ Travelling Intention and preference of airlines. The F-values are 221.19, 21.03, 29.52, 124.7 and 125.5 of statistically significant indicating that there is a significant dissimilarity between satisfaction and service quality parameters, The F-values are 114.14, 10.57, 16.3, 67.14 and 74.24 of statistically significant that a substantial distinction exists between buying or traveling intentions and service quality parameters i.e., tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, empathy, and assurance. The F-value of 97.29 is statistically significant indicating that there is a significant difference between Buying/ Travelling Intention and customer satisfaction. The results of Chi-square indicate that The Chi-square value of 0.012 is significant at a level of 5%, showing that there is a significant association between gender of customers and the level of satisfaction towards domestic carriers. The Chi-square value of 0.000 is significant at a level of 5%, showing that there is an important interrelation between customer satisfaction and the respondent's purchasing or traveling intentions.

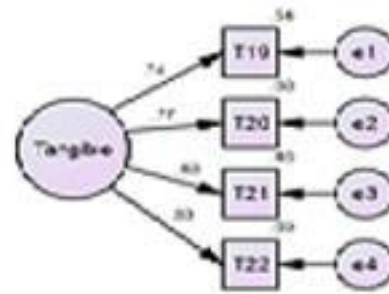


Figure 1 CFA MODEL FOR TANGIBILITY DIMENSION

First Order CFA (Figure 1) is Performed on the Tangibility dimension, which constituted of Four items. Among four items, all are meeting the criteria, i.e., SRW's > .50 (standardized regression weights), so there is no need to delete any of the statements. So after, CFA (confirmatory factor analysis) produced good fit as $CMIN/DF = 2.795$ (<3 allowable), $GFI = .988$ (>0.95 allowable), $AGFI = .942$ (>0.95 allowable), $NFI = .986$ (>0.95 allowable), $TLI = .973$ (>0.95 allowable), $CFI = .991$ (>0.95 allowable) and $RMSEA = .085$ (<0.6 allowable). T22 statement, i.e., the airline has visually appealing material associated with service helps make the strongest contributor towards Tangibility dimension, as its regression weight is

.834. The p-value is 0.06 ($P > 0.05$) accept the hypothesis the model which is constructed is good. Similarly, rest of the factors should be constructed before going to the second order CFA.

A. CONVERGENT AND DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY FOR PERCEIVED SERVICE QUALITY

Also, the Suitability of the perceived service quality assessment model also assessed on the basis of composite reliability (CR) Criteria Average Extracted Variance (AVE) and Discriminant Validity (DV) of the constructs and the outcomes are shown in Table 2.

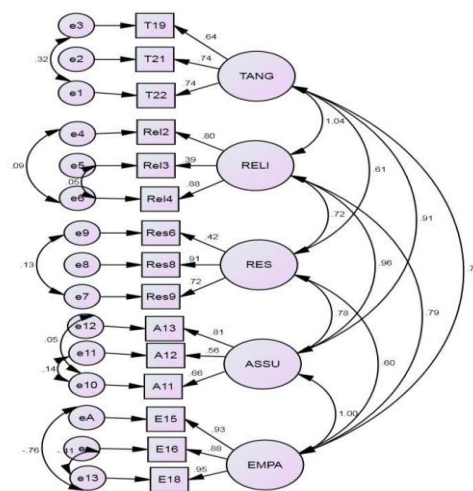


Figure 2 CFA MODEL FOR SERVICE QUALITY

Table 2 Scores of Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Perceived Service Quality Dimensions	CR	AVE	DV
Tangibility	0.77	0.67	0.64
Reliability	0.73	0.65	0.67
Responsive	0.75	0.63	0.68
Assurance	0.74	0.69	0.65
Empathy	0.79	0.72	0.69

The findings indicate that composite reliability is above the cut-off value of 0.70 for perceived service quality. The average variance obtained is above 0.50 and the discriminant validity is above 0.60 suggesting that the convergent validity is verified for customer's perception about Perceived Service Quality dimensions of airlines industry.

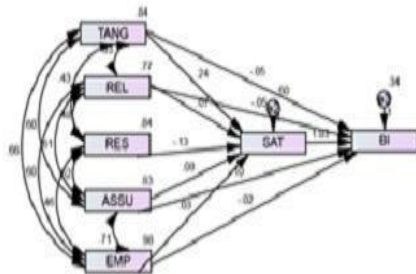


Figure 3: sem model for service quality dimension satisfaction and buying or travelling intent.

Table 3 Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
SAT	<--	TANG	0.243	0.09	2.57	0.01
SAT	<--	REL	0.069	0.1	0.669	0.5
SAT	<--	RES	-0.132	0.07	-1.884	0.06
SAT	<--	ASSU	0.083	0.1	0.81	0.42
SAT	<--	EMP	0.033	0.09	0.383	0.7
BI	<--	SAT	1.026	0.05	21.59	***
BI	<--	TANG	-0.048	0.07	-0.686	0.51

		G			0.662
BI	<--	REL	-0.052	0.08	0.49
BI	<--	ASSU	-0.102	0.08	0.17
BI	<--	EMP	-0.02	0.07	0.76

Table 4 Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

		Estimate
SAT	<-- TANG	.268
SAT	<-- REL	.073
SAT	<-- RES	-.146
SAT	<-- ASSU	.092
SAT	<-- EMP	.039
BI	<-- SAT	.853
BI	<-- TANG	-.044
BI	<-- REL	-.046
BI	<-- ASSU	-.093
BI	<-- EMP	-.020

A structural equation (SEM) has been used to verify different relationships suggested. It is a multivariate method that attempts to clarify the association ship between various variables (Kaplan, 2000). In the present research, the association ship between service quality, satisfaction and buying intent were evaluated. In order to test the mediating effect, The conditions are (a)The relationship should be significant between independent variable and dependent variable

(b) The relationship between the independent variable and the third variable should be significant, i.e. mediator. (c) There should also be a significant relation between the mediator or third variable and the result (d) The relation between independent and dependent variables becomes meaningless when the mediator enters the equation. The four-step method used through structural analysis in which we first evaluated the effect of satisfaction on the intention of purchasing (Figure 3), which is significant ($p = 0.22$, $p > 0.05$). $CMIN/DF = 1.492 (< 3$ allowable), $GFI = .998 (> 0.95$ allowable), $AGFI = .952 (> 0.95$ allowable), $NFI = .999 (> 0.95$ allowable), $TLI = .991 (> 0.95$ allowable), $CFI = 1 (> 0.95$ allowable) and $RMSEA = .044 (< 0.6$ allowable). Hence, satisfying the first condition for mediation. From the research, it can be well concluded that different variables play an important and essential part in making the right turn-around the airline industry. Low-cost carrier travelers offered the low price as well as the quality of flight service (Jou, Lam, Hensher, Chen and Kou 2008). Gronroos (1993) recommended that estimating traveler encounters the theoretical significant technique of evaluating perceived quality is the quality of service.

Seeing unmistakably what clients expect is the most critical step in high-quality service definition and delivery.

The domestic carriers need to audit their service methodology to build consumer loyalty and in this way customer satisfaction. They ought to have a substantial responsibility to service excellence as they likewise go about as the diplomats that convey the picture of the country. The most critical factor for the Airline Industry is how and what way the employees of a particular airline company behave when the customer is on board for a flight. This is quite understood because Employees represents the culture that is followed in the specific airline industry like any other industry. Another critical factor is the efficiency in Check in and Check out for the customer because that's where the most time of a customer is spent. Additional Factors which can be Pre Flight services such as email and SMS reminders and in-flight entertainment must also be taken care of for better customer satisfaction and customer delight.

V. UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION AND IMPLICATION OF THE RESEARCH

This research figured and executed appropriate service quality, to build consumer satisfaction and like this, it found the buying intentions of clients towards domestic airlines.

VI. FUTURE SCOPE OF RESEARCH

Further study could include the connection between price, customer loyalty, quality of service and job performance with the utilization of all five SERVQUAL measurements at once to determine whether airline employees' satisfaction is recognized and linked to their services or potential traveler satisfaction.

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