

# Evaluating The Influence Of Green Marketing Strategies On Consumer-Based Brand Equity: Empirical Insights From Assam, India

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## ABSTRACT

*As consumers become more conscious of environmental pressures and demand environmentally friendly products, businesses are becoming more mindful of their environmental responsibilities and are looking to modify their brand equity management strategies into building a green brand equity which can be beneficial for them. The study thus aims to assess how green marketing impacts consumer-based green brand equity (CBGBE). An analytical approach was used to examine this relationship between the green marketing mix (green product, green price, green place, and green promotion) and brand equity dimensions (green brand awareness, green brand image, green brand trust and green brand satisfaction). Hypotheses framed in this regard were tested and supported through empirical evidence. A sample of 387 consumers of non-durable goods or fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) in Kamrup district of Assam, India, were interviewed using structured questionnaires. The data gathered from the responses were then analyzed with the help of Structural Equation Modelling method. The result of the study elucidates that green marketing in a nutshell, positively impacts consumer-based green brand equity. The findings suggest that firms should try to focus highly on their green products and price, and establish green brand awareness, image, trust and satisfaction through sufficient and effective green promotion and communication, if they want to gain considerable competitiveness and economic benefits. The research will help the companies to understand the perception and behaviour of market towards environmental concerns, green products and green marketing strategies.*

**Keywords:** Green marketing, brand equity, consumer-based green brand equity (CBGBE), environment, eco-friendly, sustainability.

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## INTRODUCTION

Consumers are becoming more aware of the value of safeguarding the environment through product selection, while businesses are becoming more conscious of the environmental impact of their operations. In a study to ascertain the degree of green concept awareness and the practice of green activities among marketers in an organization, and whether there is a connection between their awareness and their daily marketing activities, it was discovered that there is a significant relationship between manager's knowledge and the application of green concepts in business's marketing mix. There is a rising number of businesses creating green products, and consumers are becoming more interested in them. The difficulty of incorporating environmental issues into corporate strategy and actions is one that all organizations must now address in light of growing global concerns about environmental sustainability and climate change (Nidumolu et al., 2009). Therefore, for businesses looking to design, develop, and market green products, understanding the key attributes of green products as well as factors influencing their price and consumers' willingness to pay more for them, sales channels, and promotional tools (the 4Ps of Green Marketing), would be very helpful. Additionally, creating green goods and services would be pointless for environmental sustainability unless they were widely adopted by consumers. Thus, marketing is crucial in this process as well because it can help develop a green market by informing customers about the advantages of environmentally friendly goods and services and raising their awareness of environmental sustainability (Rex and Baumann, 2007).

Furthermore, employing the strategy of "green branding" to foster and support any planned exchange to satisfy customers' wants may be advantageous for businesses (Polonsky, 1994). The significance of the

concept of brand equity and future trends towards eco-friendly products pave the way for research on green brand equity. Companies are switching from managing brand equity to managing green brand equity because of growing customer demand for environmentally friendly products and public knowledge of environmental issues. However, companies face significant obstacles in adopting green marketing practices, including competitive pressures, insufficient standardization, and limited government support compared to Western nations, which discourages the use of eco-friendly products and resources. Additionally, consumer reluctance to engage with initiatives like returnable packaging increases production costs, further deterring companies. These challenges highlight the importance of exploring the dimensions, obstacles, and potential of green marketing practices (Sarkar, 2012; Osman et al., 2016).

Therefore, the research attempts to address the current gap in studies related to the association between green marketing strategies and green branding, particularly in Asia's rapidly developing nations like India as compared to those conducted in developed nations, by evaluating the role and influence of green practices on the brand equity of the fast-moving consumer goods' (FMCG) brands, based on the consumers' perception in the Kamrup District of Assam in the north-east region of India. The research further undertakes a greater purpose to encourage marketers to participate more in green marketing activities for the benefit of both the marketers and consumers community.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### Green Marketing

Majority of the studies on green marketing strategies are carried out in developed and industrialized nations, while developing nations like India have very few reputable studies available (Khandelwal et al., 2019). Green Marketing or Ecological Marketing as first defined by Hennion and Kinnear (1976) is "concerned with all marketing activities that have served to help cause environmental problems and that may serve to provide a remedy for environmental problems". The green marketing concept can be comprehended through its marketing mix elements. According to Kinoti (2011), there is no restriction on the mix of activities that can be used to create green products, including re-consumption, recycling, repairable, repurposing, reducing packing material, and dispersing safer or beneficial goods. Price may be taken into consideration as a key element of the green marketing mix. When making decision regarding the purchase of green products, price level matters, as customers must be willing to pay higher for the added value of the product (Emgin and Turk, 2004). As long as there is a self-perception in the value of that goods, such as their functional qualities or their duty to the environment, consumers are willing to spend more (Esfahani, 2019). The distribution of green products from their points of origin to their points of consumption is involved in the concept of a "green place". For the organization's appearance, the location must also be favourable and capable of setting the company apart from rivals. This goal might be achieved by advertisements, displays, or the use of recycled materials to highlight various advantages in addition to the environment (Narayana 2012). The contents of advertising these green products must be carefully defined, and ecolabels can be useful instruments. Green promotional items aim to spread messages that will help the environment and those customers who choose to "go green", by fulfilling these requirements: (1) present, improve, or sustain environmentally conscious firm images. (2) support green living, with or without providing emphasis to product or service. (3) explicitly or implicitly build the relationship between products and the physical environment (Banerjee, Gulas, & Iyer, 1995).

### Green Brand Equity

The idea of "green branding" is to raise people's standards of life without causing environmental damage (Khandelwal et al., 2016). Many businesses are now gradually embracing green strategies such as green production, green packaging, etc. and presenting environmental appeal in their advertising due to intense pressure from green consumers, in order to enhance their reputation as environmentally conscious businesses and obtain an advantage over their rivals (Ginsberg & Bloom, 2004). Moreau and Panguel (2012) looked into how the company's environmental communication affected brand equity, and more specifically, how it affected brand image through CSR initiatives. In the context of sustainability and environmental issues, green CBBE can be described as the full spectrum of perceptions, conceptions, and

concerns that customers may have about a brand (Chen, 2010). The major goal of developing green brand equity for businesses is to raise environmental awareness (Delafrooz and Goli, 2015), which businesses may use to their advantage by launching their goods in various marketplaces. Consumer-based Green Brand Equity (CBGBE) has been assessed using determinants like green brand image (Chen, 2009; Ng et al., 2013; Bekk et al., 2015; Martnez, 2015), green brand trust (Chen, 2009; Martnez, 2015; Kang and Hur, 2011; Bekk et al., 2015), green satisfaction (Chen, 2009; Kang and Hur, 2011; Martnez, 2015; Bekk et al., 2015), and green awareness (Chang and Chen, 2014; Ishaq, 2020; Aaker, 1991).

Therefore, based on the assessment of existing literature, this study extracts and integrates four important dimensions namely, green brand awareness, brand image, brand trust, and brand satisfaction in order to measure green marketing practices' impact on green brand equity.

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GREEN MARKETING AND BRAND EQUITY DIMENSIONS

### Green marketing and Green Brand Awareness:

According to Aaker (1992), "green brand awareness" is the "ability of a buyer to recognize and to recall that a brand is environmentally friendly." Consumers will purchase a brand with a higher level of brand equity if that brand has a higher level of brand awareness associated to it, and this will positively affect consumers' purchasing decisions for green products (Keller K. L., 1993). According to earlier studies by Bonni and Oppenheim (2008), Maheswari and Malhorta (2011), and Tolliver-Nigro (2009), environmental knowledge has little effect on behaviour, whether or not a product is purchased and consumed may depend on consumer awareness of the advantages of a green product's use on the environment (Murthy, 2010). Companies try to increase consumers' knowledge of the products and their environmental attributes in the hope of influencing their purchase behaviour and enhance overall awareness towards green marketing, particularly on the aspect of products (Prakash, 2002). Thus, through green advertising initiatives, businesses can increase brand recognition among environmentally conscious consumers, which will impact their purchase decisions. The following hypotheses are proposed to study the green brand awareness:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1a):** Green product has a significant and positive impact on brand awareness.

**Hypothesis 1 (H1b):** Green price has a significant and positive impact on brand awareness. Hypothesis 1 (H1c): Green place has a significant and positive impact on brand awareness. Hypothesis 1 (H1d): Green promotion has a significant and positive impact on brand awareness.

### Green Marketing and Green Brand Image:

The totality of a brand's attributes, both actual and imagined, and flaws that leave a lasting impression on consumers is its brand image. It develops over time as a result of a variety of variables, including advertising, campaigns, the authenticity of the product, and first-hand consumer experience, etc. Consumers' brand perception should be used to develop the brand's image (Khandelwal, 2019). A product with a green image may strengthen the emotional bond with the consumer and hence boost customer loyalty (Ginsberg and Bloom, 2004). Companies are putting a lot of work into creating a green brand image, not just out of concern for environmental protests and penalties, but also to increase customer happiness by catering to their environmental desires (Chen, 2010). With reference to the stated arguments, this study provides the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 2 (H2a):** Green product has a significant and positive impact on brand image Hypothesis 2 (H2b): Green price has a significant and positive impact on brand image Hypothesis 2 (H2c): Green place has a significant and positive impact on brand image Hypothesis 2 (H2d): Green promotion has a significant and positive impact on brand image

### Green Marketing and Green Brand Trust:

A strong relationship is determined by the key element of trust. According to Flavian, Guinaliu, and Torres (2005) and Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande (1992), developing relationships and achieving goals both depend on trust. Trust is reviewed as a strategic exercise in the field of marketing. Blind brand

trust indicates that customers have a high level of confidence in the brand's ability to deliver the desired results. Brand trust is entirely dependent on the customer's perception of the brand's dependability, flexibility, consistency, competence, honesty, and responsibility (Doney & Cannon, 1997). Many businesses incorporate the environmental characteristics of their innovative goods with environmental promises so that consumers would trust them, which will lead to a positive brand reputation (Kalafatis, Pollard, East, & Tsogas, 1999). "Green trust" is thus defined as the confidence that consumers have in a brand's environmental legitimacy, goodness, and capacity to deliver a product or service (Chen, 2009; Ganesan, 1994; Mourad & Ahmed, 2012). So, the next hypothesis can be delivered as follows:

**Hypothesis 3 (H3a):** Green product has a significant and positive impact on brand trust

**Hypothesis 3 (H3b):** Green price has a significant and positive impact on brand trust

**Hypothesis 3 (H3c):** Green place has a significant and positive impact on brand trust

**Hypothesis 3 (H3d):** Green promotion has a significant and positive impact on brand trust

#### **Green Marketing and Green Brand Satisfaction:**

In recent years, many marketing professionals and consumer studies have adopted satisfaction as the critical analytical and pragmatic justification. Customers' understanding that a feature of an item, product, or service is providing a standard degree of utilization-akin accomplishment, taking into account the levels of under or over-fulfilment, is what determines the level of green brand satisfaction (Oliver, 1994). 'A pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfilment to satisfy a customer's environmental aspirations, sustainable expectations, and green demands,' according to Chen (2010, p. 309), is what is meant by "green satisfaction." According to Connolly and Prothero (2003), a properly executed green marketing plan can produce that satisfaction through increasing brand recall. Chen further argued that spending money on resources for environmental satisfaction can raise the value of the green brand. According to Mourad and Ahmed (2012), green satisfaction and green trust are the best indicators of consumer perception of green brands. Based on the above arguments, following hypotheses are derived:

**Hypothesis 4 (H4a):** Green product has a significant and positive impact on brand satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 4 (H4b):** Green price has a significant and positive impact on brand satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 4 (H4c):** Green place has a significant and positive impact on brand satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 4 (H4d):** Green promotion has a significant and positive impact on brand satisfaction.

#### **METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH**

The present empirical study follows a quantitative approach that aims to examine the influence of green marketing mix elements, namely green product, green price, green place and green promotion, on the dimensions of green brand equity namely, green brand awareness, green brand image, green brand trust and green brand satisfaction (Aaker, 1991; Chen, 2009; Kang and Hur, 2011; Ng et al., 2013; Chang and Chen, 2014; Bekk et al., 2015; Ishaq, 2020). The data were collected from a total of 387 consumers of Kamrup District, in the state of Assam (having the highest literacy rate among the districts in Assam, according to the population census, 2011, Govt. of India), through structured questionnaire that were distributed purposively. The questionnaire was developed based on the items or questions from existing literature as cited above. The responses were based on consumers' perception, knowledge and experience towards the consumer durable goods' brands adopting green characteristics and the elements of green marketing, that they have used or come across. The hypotheses stated in the previous section are framed in order to conduct the study which are analyzed using the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) method. These hypotheses can be represented through the following research framework as shown in fig.1 below.

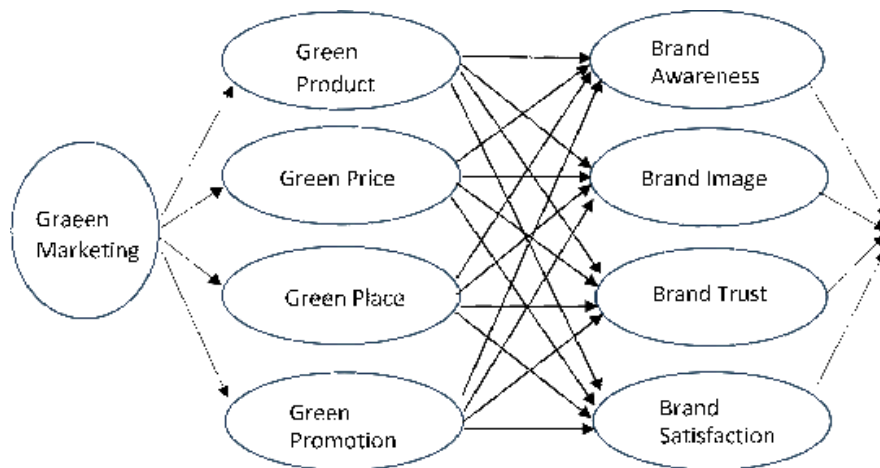


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework

Source: Authors

## ANALYSIS OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

### Demographic Status of Respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents reveals that 54% of them were male and the rest were female. Majority of these respondents (66%) were found to be in the age group of 18-35 years of age followed by the age group of 36-45 years with 22% respondents and around 12% respondents above 45 years of age. In terms of their income level, majority of them (36%) were in the earning category of below Rs. 30,000 per month, followed by 31% respondents in the earning bracket of Rs. 30,000 - 60,000 per month, about 15% respondents with income ranging from Rs. 60,000 - 100,000 and above, while as many as 18% respondents still had no income source, who comprised of students as well as job seekers. The education status showed that majority of the respondents were under-graduates (34%) and post-graduates (33%), followed by 13% Ph.D. degree holders and scholars, 10% higher secondary level and about 9% with other qualifications such as diploma, certification courses, professional degree etc.

### Assessment and Selection of Factors

Table 1 below depicts the factor loading of each of the items. The degree to which an item represents the underlying concept is shown by factor loading. It is often advised to use factor loadings greater than 0.70 (Vinzi, Chin, Henseler, & Wang, 2010). Here, all the loadings of each factor fall close to 1 and hence, satisfy the recommended limit. Therefore, no item was deleted and all the items were considered for further analysis.

Table 1: Factor loadings

	BRAS	BRAT	BRAW	BRIM	GPLAC	GPRIC	GPROD	GPRM
BRAS1	0.856							
BRAS2	0.824							
BRAS3	0.861							
BRAT1		0.755						
BRAT2		0.851						
BRAT3		0.875						
BRAW1			0.928					
BRAW2			0.881					
BRAW3			0.912					
BRIM1				0.921				
BRIM2				0.846				
BRIM3				0.869				

GPLAC1					0.907			
GPLAC2					0.854			
GPLAC3					0.839			
GPRIC1						0.889		
GPRIC2						0.867		
GPRIC3						0.864		
GPROD1							0.867	
GPROD2							0.923	
GPROD3							0.87	
GPRM1								0.87
GPRM2								0.864
GPRM3								0.85

(Note: BRAS=brand satisfaction, BRAT=brand trust, BRAW=brand awareness, BRIM=brand image, GPROD=green product, GPRIC=green price, GPLAC=green place, GPRM=green promotion; Source: Self/authors)

**Reliability and Validity Tests**

Table 2 below describes the construct reliability and validity. Measuring a measurement model's dependability is considered the first step in an evaluation. Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR) and average variance explained (AVE) values, are used to gauge the measurement model's internal consistency in order to determine its reliability and validity, in accordance with the suggested cut-off values of Hair et al. (2010). When the Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.7 or greater, a construct is considered to have internal dependability (Nunnally & Beinstein, 1994). From table 3, it has been depicted that the Cronbach's Alpha of all the constructs vary from 0.772 to 0.839 and hence it is considerable. Additionally, if the AVE value is equal to or greater than 0.50, the construct, on average, explains more than half of the variation of its indicators and as a result, it is generally accepted that an AVE value of 0.50 or above is appropriate (Hair et al., 2013; Barclays et al., 1995). Here, the AVE of the constructs ranges from 0.686 to 0.823. Hence, the constructs' reliability and validity is established.

**Table 2: Construct validity and reliability**

Constructs	Measuring items	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Brand Satisfaction	BRAS1	0.803	0.807	0.717
	BRAS2			
	BRAS3			
Brand Trust	BRAT1	0.772	0.791	0.686
	BRAT2			
	BRAT3			
Brand Awareness	BRAW1	0.893	0.907	0.823
	BRAW2			
	BRAW3			
Brand Image	BRIM1	0.853	0.87	0.773
	BRIM2			
	BRIM3			
Green Place	GPLAC1	0.836	0.841	0.753
	GPLAC2			
	GPLAC3			
Green Price	GPRIC1	0.845	0.847	0.763
	GPRIC2			

	GPRIC3			
Green Product	GPROD1	0.864	0.865	0.787
	GPROD2			
	GPROD3			
Green Promotion	GPRM1	0.826	0.828	0.742
	GPRM2			
	GPRM3			

**Discriminant Validity Test**

Discriminant validity ensures that a construct measure is distinct from other measures and accurately captures phenomena of interest in a structural equation model (Hair et al., 2010). One of the most often used methods for evaluating the discriminant validity of measurement models, the Fornell-Larcker criterion states that the correlation between a construct and any other construct must be bigger than the square root of the average variance retrieved by the construct. Discriminant validity is proven when this prerequisite is met. The diagonal of the correlation matrix displays the square roots of the AVE coefficients (Hair et al., 2013). From table 3 below, it has been revealed that all the AVE along the diagonal is greater than other construct.

**Table 3: Discriminant Validity-Fornell Larcker Criterion**

	BRAS	BRAT	BRAW	BRIM	GPLAC	GPRIC	GPROD	GPRM
BRAS	0.847							
BRAT	0.734	0.828						
BRAW	0.562	0.581	0.907					
BRIM	0.747	0.81	0.553	0.879				
GPLAC	0.668	0.806	0.598	0.67	0.867			
GPRIC	0.698	0.785	0.595	0.755	0.753	0.874		
GPROD	0.694	0.761	0.604	0.699	0.748	0.753	0.887	
GPRM	0.794	0.813	0.599	0.683	0.68	0.687	0.69	0.861

**Analysis of SEM**

The results from table 4 of the estimated SEM model revealed that green product has a significant impact on all the green brand equity dimensions, namely, brand satisfaction ( $\beta=0.147$ ,  $p=0.007$ ,  $t=2.681$ ), brand trust ( $\beta=0.107$ ,  $p=0.003$ ,  $t=3.023$ ), brand awareness ( $\beta=0.188$ ,  $p=0.003$ ,  $t=2.975$ ) and brand image ( $\beta=0.178$ ,  $p=0$ ,  $t=3.521$ ). Hence, all the hypotheses H1a, H2a, H3a and H4a are supported. Similarly, green price is also seen to have a significant impact on brand satisfaction ( $\beta=0.172$ ,  $p=0.003$ ,  $t=2.927$ ), brand trust ( $\beta=0.204$ ,  $p=0$ ,  $t=5.353$ ), brand awareness ( $\beta=0.151$ ,  $p=0.022$ ,  $t=2.289$ ) and brand image ( $\beta=0.407$ ,  $p=0$ ,  $t=6.915$ ). Hence, the hypotheses H1b, H2b, H3b and H4b are all supported. Green place has no significant impact on brand satisfaction ( $\beta=0.072$ ,  $p=0.147$ ,  $t=1.451$ ) and brand image ( $\beta=0.074$ ,  $p=0.159$ ,  $t=1.409$ ) whereas, green place has a significant impact on brand trust ( $\beta=0.3$ ,  $p=0$ ,  $t=8.686$ ) and brand awareness ( $\beta=0.177$ ,  $p=0.018$ ,  $t=2.358$ ). Hence, H2c and H4c are not supported, whereas, H1c and H3c are supported. Green promotion has a significant impact on all the dimensions or variables of brand equity as well namely, brand satisfaction ( $\beta=0.526$ ,  $p=0$ ,  $t=12.927$ ) and brand trust ( $\beta=0.399$ ,  $p=0$ ,  $t=15.507$ ), brand awareness ( $\beta=0.246$ ,  $p=0$ ,  $t=4.547$ ) and brand image ( $\beta=0.231$ ,  $p=0$ ,  $t=4.451$ ). Hence the hypotheses H1d, H2d, H3d and H4d are all supported.

**Table 4: SEM Results**

Hypotheses	Beta (M)	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	Results
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Businesses should also pay close attention to designing environmentally friendly packaging that utilizes environmentally friendly materials (recycled, recyclable, biodegradable, compostable), minimizes the amount of materials used (eventually making packaging unnecessary, such as in the case of draught detergents), and conveys the ecologically friendliness of the product. These activities may help businesses improve their brand's image, promote sustainable lifestyles, emphasize the environmental advantages of their products, and lessen the knowledge imbalance that often characterizes green products by using green advertising, which ultimately will help develop faith and satisfaction on the brand, among the consumers.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study's goal is to determine how the green marketing mix tools affect the development of consumer-based green brand equity. The study offers crucial information that aids researchers in looking into customer-based green brand equity related concerns and establishing green marketing roles and strategies in a developing market. The study's findings provide insightful information about how each green marketing mix component affects the development of each CBGBE dimension. These findings could help businesses determine which green marketing components and functions will have the greatest impact on their CBBE and how to create green marketing campaigns.

The current study generates findings that green product significantly impacts brand satisfaction, brand image, brand trust and brand awareness. This conclusion backs with earlier research by Davari and Strutton (2014) and Sohail (2017) showing green products have a favourable impact on customer-based brand equity. Also, according to Tsai et al. (2020), the image of a brand is substantially impacted by green products. This study finds that green price significantly impacts brand satisfaction, brand image, brand trust and brand awareness. The result supports the previous findings by Davari and Strutton (2014) and Sohail (2017), who suggest that green price positively influences customer-based green brand equity. Moreover, green promotion significantly impacts brand trust, brand image, brand awareness and brand satisfaction. However, green place on the other hand, does not have a significant impact on brand image and brand satisfaction. Thus, it can be argued that the conventional components of the green marketing mix overall have a strong and significant impact on the four dimensions of green brand equity, except for green place on green brand satisfaction and image, and that, the CBGBE particularly depends heavily on green product, promotion and price.

## **LIMITATION AND FUTURE SCOPE OF RESEARCH**

The present research considers specific and limited number of dimensions or factors to study the influence of green marketing on brand equity or the relationship between them, among many others. There is an ample scope to conduct future research undertaking various other dimensions. The research is also limited to a district in the state of Assam, India, the results of which may not be justified to generalize in the rest of the country. Hence, there is an ample scope for further research involving broader geographical area, a comparative study based on different geographic and demographic segments etc., which would be useful to understand the differences in their attitude, perception and behaviour and its impact on the businesses and socio-economic conditions as well.

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