

## An Overview of Corporate Social Responsibility in the Hospitality and Tourism Sector of Pakistan

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The purpose of the paper is to deal with Corporate Social Responsibility with reference to the hospitality and tourism sector of Pakistan. Due to the excessive involvement of the corporate social responsibility in each business, there is a need to identify the Corporate social responsibility in the tourism sector from a business point of view.

**Design/Methodology:** The study is based on the qualitative design in which the critical review of the literature methodology is being used.

**Findings:** The study explored the key areas of Corporate Social Responsibility in the tourism sector of Pakistan. Key findings suggest that the factors that contribute more in the tourism are the rich culture of Pakistan, art and film industries, and extensive landscape of Pakistan. Further factors are needed to be explored because this area is vast and required more research. Moreover, China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a great step that can improve the tourism culture in Pakistan by making linkages with the neighboring countries.

**Implications:** The gaps identified in the study suggest that the security system as well as the law and order situation and policy implication for the international tourist in Pakistan needs to be improved. Moreover, there is also a need to improve the tourist resorts and residence to provide them an attractive environment. It is also suggested to conduct international festivals in the country that may promote tourism and hospitality. Further, there is a need to explore the interest of the tourist and to build close linkages with the rest of countries around the world.

**Keywords:** Corporate social responsibility, Hospitality, Tourism, Culture.

## 1 Introduction

Pakistan is a country blessed with beautiful landscapes, highly fertile agricultural lands and an extremely zealous population. The extensive variety of tourist spots makes Pakistan a country which can gain great business through tourism. However, there is still a lot more for Pakistan to work on before moving towards international tourism. One of the main factors that need to be

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entailed in studying tourism in Pakistan is the phenomenon of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The increasing chances of enhancing the business and economy of a country through tourism require careful consideration of the corporate social responsibilities. These responsibilities revolve around the maintenance of the environment and social factors (Schwartz, 2017). Analyzing the effects of a business on society and the environment are crucial for any kind of business. CSR has become an important aspect of business across the world. The phenomenon of volunteerism has also become integrated with CSR. Understanding these concepts can help in better business development.

As far as tourism is considered, the environmental and social impacts become all the more important to ensure that none of the natural resources are harmed in the wake on increasing the flow of tourists (Font et al., 2016). Moreover, it is also important to ensure that the lives of the locals are not disturbed due to an increase in the influx of tourists. Carefully maintaining these two factors can help in creating an environment of peace and stability in the country. To enhance tourism in Pakistan, it is important to ensure that these factors are kept in mind and that business development occurs with a strong focus on the maintenance of corporate social responsibilities. It is also important to ensure that the culture of Pakistan is promoted and that the fear of terrorism is removed completely in order to enhance the flow of tourists in the country.

## **1.1 Research Objective**

The objective of this research project is to identify the role of CSR in the tourism sector of Pakistan. The motivation of the study comes from an analysis of the economic gains that are associated with tourism across the world. The regular influx of foreigners leads towards increasing the business of a country. Therefore, it is important to explore the possibilities that exist for Pakistan and identify the ways in which those opportunities can be utilized to the maximum for gaining an economic edge in the market. The most highlighted objectives of this study include;

- Analyzing the current status of tourism in Pakistan.
- Exploring the possibility of an increase in international tourism as a result of the CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) development.
- Identifying the existence and use of the concepts of CSR in Pakistan
- Exploring the ways in which CSR can be incorporated into the tourism sector of Pakistan.
- Analyzing the extents of volunteerism among the people of Pakistan.
- Looking into the international image of Pakistan in association with the threats of terrorism in various parts of the country.

The above-explained objectives may although seem widespread but are all associated deeply with one another. Since tourism is a widespread industry, it is important to identify all the possible aspects that are associated with it and identify the interrelation and effect of each of those aspects of tourism.

## **1.2 Novelty of the Study**

The proposed research study is highly novel as there is no previous data on the analysis of CSR in the tourism sector. Although there are quite a number of studies from Pakistan which are related to the exploration of the ways in which tourism can be enhanced and identifying the economic effects of tourism, none of these studies have focused on the need of CSR in the tourism industry. Sharif et al. (2017) explored the negative impacts of tourism on the environment of the country. It was reported that an increase in tourism and the rise in the activities of the businesses related to tourism have led to an increase in the emission of considerable amounts of Carbon dioxide in the environment. This was found to be associated with a deterioration of the environment. Therefore, it has been suggested that the government should take initiative and develop policies for addressing the issues pertaining to the maintenance of the environment. However, although this study touched a topic very close to the concepts of CSR, the scope of the report did not include a consideration for developing a business framework that included CSR as an essential component, rather it focused on the duties of the government towards the environmental preservation.

Previously, a study from New Zealand had proposed the incorporation of CSR in the tourism industry. This study has also explained the existence and need for CSR in the tourism sector. Furthermore, this study proposed the development of a framework for ensuring that the tourism sector became public centered and ensured that the needs of the tourists were met, without harming the interests of the locals residing in the areas which are the most desired destinations among the tourists (Hughes & Scheyvens, 2016). The development of positive relations with the people dwelling in the different localities and ensuring that the business could last for a long term was among the major considerations in the development of a workable framework. The idea of developing a framework of CSR in the tourism sector is unique and has so far not been researched or considered in Pakistan. Currently, the studies on tourism in Pakistan have revolved around the possibilities of enhancing the economic growth, analyzing the barriers in tourism (particularly terrorism and natural disasters) and identifying ways in which tourism can be promoted in Pakistan. Thus, there is a lot of scope in trying to identify the ways in which CSR could be included in the tourism industry. The rise in the popularity of CPEC, the broadening of the economic corridor of Pakistan and the increase in the interest of the foreigners provide a boost to the need of identifying the business perspective of the tourism sector (Mustafa & Zafar, 2017; Makhdoom et al., 2018). Regarding this, identifying the levels of volunteerism among the Pakistani population and the sense of CSR among the people involved in the tourism industry are new topics and can help in identifying information that could aid the tourism industry using new knowledge.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the tourism sector of Pakistan from a business perspective. The increasing emphasis of the United Nations of moving towards sustainable development (United Nations, 2015) has led towards a worldwide increase in the involvement of CSR in the business sector. The consideration of the social and environmental aspects helps in ensuring that the business initiatives do not harm the population or their living environment in any way (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). Moreover, analyzing the current trends in tourism along with the future prospects of a possible enhancement in the flow of tourists needs to be analyzed. The increasing interests of the foreigners in Pakistan the development of an economic corridor with China (Irshad, 2015), are among the major reasons that provoke interest in trying to identify the ways in which tourism could possibly be enhanced.

### **1.4 The Scope of the Study**

The study on the proposed topic of CSR in the Hospitality and Tourism Sector of Pakistan has a huge scope. This scope entails the attributes of the business and a possible future direction of enhancing the economy of Pakistan. The results of this study are not only important for the tourism industry of Pakistan but will also help in identifying the ways in which the overall business sector of Pakistan could benefit from the revenue generated through tourism. The inclusion of a novel perspective in the research study such as the CSR holds the possibility of ensuring that the future research in the area of tourism can benefit from the results generated through this study. Moreover, this study can possibly help in identifying the areas which still remain unexplored from the perspective of tourism in Pakistan.

## **2 Literature Review**

There are a plethora of studies which have been carried out to explore the areas of tourism, business and the combination of both these study areas. CSR is a relatively new topic when it comes to business development. There has been an increasing focus on the involvement of CSR in business. This is due to the focus of the UN towards the achievement of sustainable development goals. These goals entail the sustenance of the environment and the maintenance of the business activities such that they are in line with the goals of achieving good human health and an environment that helps in the achievement of that goal. The following sections provide an overview of the existing research studies regarding the concepts of CSR and tourism. There will also be an inclusion of the aspects of volunteerism, analysis of the strategic position of Pakistan, the existing opportunities and the possible outcomes of CPEC.

## **2.1 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

CSR is a relatively new concept which became integrated with the business sector quite rapidly. The concept of CSR in the business includes the idea that business should consider the safety of human beings and the environment. Ensuring that the environment is not harmed due to business activities. Also, human lives should ideally be enhanced and made easier through business, not harmed. The public is considered as one of the major stakeholders of any business. Therefore, meeting the needs of the players and ensuring that they are not harmed in any way is extremely crucial for maintaining a successful business. It is now becoming increasingly recognized that CSR involves the public as an active part of the business (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Therefore, it is possible that many of the business organizations move towards the inclusion of public representatives for making the important decisions of the company.

Hatipoglu et al. (2019) conducted a study to analyze the CSR in the tourism industry of turkey. The study was based on the qualitative method that covers the interviews, observations and company documents. The results of the study analyze that CSR is a tool for sustainable development in the tourism industry. Corporate activities have an impact on each sector of the economy such as the tourism and hospitality sector (Hatipoglu, Ertuna, & Salman, 2019). CSR plays important role in the development of the economy and improves the rural life of the people (McLennan & Banks, 2019). CSR factors improve the firm performance, however in the hotel industry, CSR improves the employee's strength, customer experience and reputation of the company (González-Rodríguez, Martín-Samper, Köseoglu, & Okumus, 2019).

Ghaderi et al. (2019) reviewed the four and five-star hotels performance in Tehran through a quantitative study. The results of the study contribute that CSR directly impacts the performance of the hotel industry (Ghaderi, Mirzapour, Henderson, & Richardson, 2019). Paskova and Zelenka (2019) check the level of crucial in the social responsibility of tourism sector of Pakistan. The study found that CSR plays very important role in tourism and contributes to the sustainability of the sector (Paskova & Zelenka, 2019).

CSR has also been implicated in terms of support. This support includes the aid and understanding provided to the employees and their job security. A broader perspective of CSR comprises of the inclusion of diversity in the business. This diversity includes the perspectives of race, social background, religion, color and creed (Wells et al., 2016). Broadening the horizons of business is aimed at increasing the chances of gaining better business and identifying the potential ways in which a sustainable business could be developed. Innovation is also an important aspect of business growth which can be aligned with CSR (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). Therefore, it is important to note that CSR has wide applications and is one of the essential attributes of the modern business world.

Detailed analysis of the concepts of CSR and its history provide evidence that initially this concept was overlapped with business ethics and believed to be just another term for morals and

ethics (Matten & Moon, 2004). However, with the passage of time, there were various developments and refinements in the idea as better understanding developed among the people. The development of understanding about CSR led to an increasing requirement for the people involved in the business to enhance their skills and align themselves with the modern business world. Learning about the responsibilities towards the public and the environment becomes more important and the business environment changed rapidly. Business institutes and universities increasingly began exploring the possible course curriculums for including the concepts of CSR and ensuring that the students were abreast of the dynamics of modern business (Cowton & Cummins, 2003). However, it has been reported that even after many years of the development of the concepts of CSR, there existed various gaps in the research in this area. The gaps existed due to the lack of a proper framework or guidelines which could confer the true meaning of CSR and its purpose (Lee, 2008). It is therefore important to ensure that CSR is explored and studied in accordance with the field being explored. Aligning the business goals and social responsibilities with the type of business being conducted is extremely crucial in ensuring that the most appropriate results are achieved.

The role of CSR in terms of tourism is immense. Since it has been established that the tourism industry contributes a significant amount in the economy of a country, the need to ensure that the tourists are made to feel at home has also increased. The chance of increasing the employment opportunities make it worthy for establishments to work towards the increase of tourism in their country. There is a need to ensure that the infrastructure of a country develops in accordance with the interest of the tourists. The money gained from the tourism industry should contribute towards the development of airports, bus and train stations, and other such facilities so as to attract and facilitate the tourists. However, there are also certain issues in the tourism industry. It is quite likely that the employees in this sector may not have regular or fixed wages as tourism mainly picks up during the holiday season and the earning is thus seasonal. Moreover, the wages of the employees are generally low and the working conditions are not up to the mark. Hence, there needs to be a delicate balance in the work and gains for ensuring that the industry keeps flourishing and the employees benefit from it.

Furthermore, the increase in tourism has been linked with the need to enhance sustainability. The aspect of sustainability became recognized with the concerns raised by the United Nations. It was observed that the influx of tourists can have negative effects on the environment. Thus, it became important to track the activities of the tourists and maintain the sites such that they remain feasible and accessible. The government needs to be involved in tourism for regulating this sector. Also, it is the duty of all those involved in this industry to ensure good governance. As it happens, tourism is not only about attracting the tourists for economic gains, rather it is also aimed at providing tourists with a good experience and a show of honest hospitality.

Efficient use of energy as well as technology has become integrated with tourism. The concepts of CSR have been widened to include all dimensions of sustainability and environmental protection. It is no more just a business that needs to be flourished, rather a resource that needs to

be protected in order to keep running for years to come. Tourism can only flourish if the tourist attraction sites are maintained to be attractive as well as clean. These concepts of maintenance were discussed first in a conference in Johannesburg in the year 2002, following UN's expression of interest in moving towards sustainable tourism. Henceforth, the idea about sustainability in the tourism industry became integrated as the most essential concept. In this regard, technology and energy have also been discussed far and wide. Energy efficient ecosystem and sustainability in the use of technology became important as the common usage of technology made it important to ensure that modernization did not lead to any threats towards the environment. Here, it is important to realize that the true concept of sustainability is to ensure that the environment is not maintained for the current generations but also for the coming generations.

There are multiple ways in which sustainable tourism can be maintained. These methods include the minimization of waste and recycling of all the materials which are no longer useful. The water bodies and all sources of water supply should be managed and maintained. Additionally, the energy sources and electricity, in particular, should be saved as much as possible. Transportation should also be environment-friendly. The vehicles should not emit any hazardous or poisonous gases or other substances. The wastewater treatment plants should be established at different locations to save water and increase the chances of maintaining resources over a long time. Moreover, there is a need to form committees and hire staff for ensuring environmental safety and developing long-term sustainability.

The concepts of sustainability and environment safety have come under certain criticism. It has been established that the true concept of sustainability and CSR include not just the environment but also the social concerns. However, the criticism lies in the fact that CSR and sustainability have both been simplified to include only the topic of environmental safety. This has been speculated to have decreased the overall understanding and impact of integrating CSR in businesses and organizations. It is important to note that the CSR related activities were initially aimed at paying attention to the public needs and to enhance the economy. Therefore, the criticism seems justified and it is important to build a better understanding of the social responsibilities.

The tourism industry does not only have the responsibility of keeping the environment safe and healthy, but they also need to build strong and positive public relations. Ethical behaviors and respect for the tourists and foreigners is a must and the people involved in the tourism sector should ideally be trained to take care of the guests and ensure that they have a truly wonderful experience. The need for collaboration between the hotel management, transport authorities, and tour guides is a key towards providing a truly exhilarating experience to the tourists (Meo et al., 2018). The merger of all these aspects can lead to the development of a truly professional and courteous sector that provides the most positive experience and memorable times to the tourists. Long-term planning is needed for truly establishing a strong tourism industry. There may also be a need for revising and restructuring the way that the tourism sector works. Hence, the understanding of public relations is helpful in strengthening any kind of industry and the tourism sector is no different.

## 2.2 Hospitality and Tourism in Pakistan

The tourism sector of Pakistan has faced many setbacks in the past decades due to terrorism (Lodhi, 2017). The revival of this sector has been initiated only recently with the aim of promoting the natural sites of Pakistan as a means of increasing the economic strength of the country. Promoting peace and attracting foreign tourists is among the long-term plans for the economic revival of Pakistan. It is believed that the economic strength of the country could be increased, and the debts could be reduced once the tourism sector is truly revived (Brida et al., 2016). Moreover, the cultural exchange programs and the interest of the foreigners in the culture and values of Pakistan can prove to be a positive change for promoting tourism. However, the biggest barrier has always been the maintenance of peace in Pakistan (Liu & Pratt, 2017). As it happens, the areas of interest from the point of tourism have also been linked with terrorist activities. The war on terror in Afghanistan resulted in instability in Pakistan, particularly in the North Western region, which shares its border with the war zone (Afghanistan). The weak infrastructure of Pakistan and the lack of international support made Pakistan highly unpredictable as a tour site (Sönmez & Sönmez, 2017).

The rich history and culture of Pakistan along with the geographical location make it an important tourist destination. The archeological sites such as Moen Jo Daro, Larkana, which represent the rich history of the Muslims along with the valleys and mountain ranges in the North of Pakistan and breathtaking sites such as the Neelum valley, Swat, Naran, Kalam, Gilgit Baltistan, Hunza, Malam Jabba, Murre, Chitral and other such areas attract the local as well as foreign tourists. Adventure activities such as the opportunity of river rafting, fishing, desert safari in Thar and Cholistan along with the possibility of attending events like the Shandur polo festival and cultural events of Karakoram and Kailash valley make Pakistan extremely rich in terms of tourism options (Arshad et al., 2018). Building upon these opportunities requires the support of the government and the law enforcing agencies. Moreover, the increase in tourism cannot only provide economic gains to the country but can also lead towards the increase in peace and stability of Pakistan.

The long-lasting effects of terrorism in Pakistan led to great setbacks for Pakistan. It has taken Pakistan very long to get back on track and promote tourism in the country. However, positive changes have begun, and it has been seen that there is now an increased awareness about the role of tourism in terms of economic gains. The appreciation for the landscape of Pakistan the strategic geographical location of the country makes it an interesting site for international tourists as well as the business experts. The positive changes in Pakistan have led to an increase in tourism which has resulted in a significant 9% rise in the economic contributions gained through tourism (Sharif et al., 2017). The population of Pakistan has been noted to have an increased interest in recreational tours and exploratory escapades within the country. The hopes of exploring the nature reserves and scenic beauty that Pakistan has to offer has led to a remarkable increase in the tourism business (Ilyas, et

al., 2016). Moreover, there is now also an increase in the facilities and lodging areas at the tourist attraction sites. Developing new hotels, restaurants and increasing the types of leisure activities have further caused an increase in tourism among the Pakistani population (Ahmad, 2016). It has also been noticed that the Pakistani population is quite enthusiastic about recreational tours and other similar activities and are willing to pay for holidays in order to gain mental and emotional relaxation (Ashfaq et al., 2017).

In addition to tourism in Pakistan from the local population, there has also been a revival of international tourism. This revival is owed to the control of terrorism in the country. Moreover, one of the most important factors which attract international tourists is the culture and hospitality in Pakistan (Aleemi, 2015). The customer care at the hotel industry of Pakistan has been explored in the recent year to gain insights about the levels of hospitality and customer care in the area of tourism. It has been found that the hotel industry in Pakistan has suffered due to the lack of tourism. Even though there is state of the art hotels in the big cities, the presence of quality hotels at the tourist attraction sites is still lagging. The recent increase in the control on the law and order situation in Pakistan and the success of the tourism industry has caused a revival of the hotel industries as well (Imran et al., 2014). There is now an increased interest among the businessmen of Pakistan to play their role in working towards the expansion of hoteling and tourism. It has been seen that the customer satisfaction aspect is present among the tourism and hotel industries of Pakistan as these sectors have worked hard to gain and maintain customers in a short time. The ‘word to mouth’ promotion of the hotels and their services have also been found to play a positive role in enhancing the business of hotels and tour groups in Pakistan (Ahmad & Sattar, 2018). These factors clearly represent the efforts that have been made to increase tourism in Pakistan.

### **2.3 Volunteerism and Tourism in Pakistan**

The Pakistani population has a huge role to play in the promotion of tourism in Pakistan. The acts of volunteering and providing foreign tourists with a sense of belonging through hospitality and care are the need of the time. It is true that tourism in Pakistan is still in a cradling stage and there is a long way to go for the tourism industry to be truly established and flourishing but the positive increase in the economic gains through local tourism has caused an increasing interest in identifying ways which could cause an increase in international tourism in Pakistan. The role of volunteers and entrepreneurs has been deemed important in this regard. It has been seen that the public of Pakistan has played an incredible role in promoting the culture and extending hospitality to the foreigners, providing them with a good experience during their time here and hence causing a long-lasting impact on the tourists. Hence, the role of the Pakistani population in strengthening the tourism industry cannot be undermined.

The revival of tourism is still lacking a strong role from the government of Pakistan. It is specifically the startups and entrepreneurship ventures that have resulted in promoting and

enhancing the importance of recreational activities and tour sites for the economic betterment of Pakistan. The local tour groups and the arrangements made by the various organizations working in the tourism sector have provided an immense boost to the local travels (Qamar & Baloch, 2017). This clearly reflects the sense of responsibility and volunteerism among the Pakistani population. The sense of duty among the locals towards sustainable tourism has also been noted. It has been seen that the sustainable tourism idea is present in Pakistan and the locals are increasingly working towards ensuring that the tourist attractions sites of Pakistan are maintained to be clean and that the natural resources are not harmed or depleted as a result of increasing tourism. Moreover, the implementation of sustainability laws and policies is also ensured and upheld by the locals of Pakistan (Hussain et al., 2017). Providing visitors with a positive experience and honest hospitality has given a positive sense to the international community about the Pakistani culture and the natural beauty present in this country.

The involvement of the business sector and the locals can provide a boost to the tourism sector. Evidence from the travel destinations around the world provide insights into the role of local businesses in enhancing tourism by attracting the international community. It has been seen that the hotels, resorts, restaurants, recreational activities, and culture all jointly influence and determine the interest of the tourists. Therefore, the sense of business among the Pakistani population can prove to be a turning point for tourism. Investing in hotels and building state of the art resorts has already begun in Pakistan, which is attracting the locals and also the foreign visitors. Increasing the options of recreational activities available and promoting the Pakistani landscape and natural resources through social media interactions and building strong ties with the foreigners is the way forward for establishing a bright and strong future of tourism in Pakistan.

### **3. Findings**

Currently, there are number of areas that have remained unexplored in terms of tourism and hospitality in Pakistan. The culture and diversity of Pakistan have been explored in depth due to local tourism and the huge number of festivals across the country. The revival of art and film industries have also been linked with the increase in the recreational activities in the country. However, the same has not been established for international tourism in Pakistan. Even though the hospitality of the Pakistanis has been widely noticed and there is hope for an increase in the international tourism in the country which has particularly been linked with CPEC and the relations that Pakistan shares with China (Ali et al., 2017), the current research data is not enough to provide answers about the current situation. There is evidence about customer satisfaction with the hotel industries, interest in the recreational activities, increasing control over the terrorism in Pakistan and an interest of the foreigners in the culture of Pakistan. There is a need to find the connections between all these factors in order to truly fill the gaps and find the missing links.

The rich history and extensive landscape of Pakistan provide a potential for the growth and spread of tourism in the country. Identifying the gaps and filling the areas which provide barriers towards increasing international tourism in the country. Identifying ways in which security issues can be scale down and the international community could be attracted towards Pakistan. In recent years, there have been various international bloggers and tourists, who have visited the northern areas of Pakistan and have expressed satisfaction and pleasure at having explored Pakistan. It is an interesting turn of events and provides hope for the bright future of tourism in Pakistan. It would be worthy to further explore the interests of the tourists in Pakistan and the ways in which the international community could be directed towards visiting Pakistan for recreational purposes and for exploring the diverse culture present here. The future holds immense opportunities for the tourism industries and economy of Pakistan. The first step could be to develop close linkages with the other countries in South Asia so that the individuals belonging to similar cultures may be attracted towards exploring Pakistan. An interesting angle in promoting tourism is to promote the cultural heritages (Kester, 2014), and the monuments present in Pakistan. This particular act may result in attracting people sharing a common history with Pakistan. There is also a role of the establishment and the political leaders in this task as developing ties with the international community requires the involvement of the government (Hall et al., 2016). It is hoped that filling these gaps may articulate a better future of tourism in Pakistan and bring a positive dawn for the economy of the country.

The importance of CPEC and the relations with China cannot be forgotten as far as tourism is concerned. It is quite likely that the strong political relations with China and the recent developments in the CPEC project would lead towards a brighter era of tourism in Pakistan. The initiative has although been taken as a political and business venture but the establishment of a corridor between the two countries is believed to cause an increase in the foreign tourists coming towards Pakistan. The infrastructure development has received a boost due to CPEC and it is hoped that it will benefit the tourism industry of Pakistan as a better national infrastructure can be highly useful in attracting the international community to visit Pakistan (Ali et al., 2017). Hence it is hoped that Pakistan can benefit from CPEC in a lot of ways, specifically, an increase in tourism.

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