

Sustainability and national identity affirmation through products design

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Abstract

The designer may take a general direction in his design which emphasizes the customs of his country or a model that expresses its own culture, which contributes greatly to the preservation of the cultural and folklore of the people, as well as to its dissemination throughout the world, especially in light of the popularity received by these heritage products in European and international markets. Therefore, it is important to preserve the national identity and to continue to innovate and withstand the attempts to invade the identity of the people through globalization. It is not intended to confirm the identity of the national use and transfer symbols and symbolic elements of the heritage literally, but usually the designer analyzes the basic lines of this heritage, style and civilization are being integrated into the design lines in an innovative way to build the form or part of it to indicate the value of the product in the required direction. The preservation of the Egyptian identity may come from the design lines that confirm the Egyptian civilization or the character of the pharaonic civilization, or the basic symbolic elements of the distinctive forms of the pharaonic products or Islamic or Coptic elements and their different decorations, with a particular culture or habits that are psychologically linked to the user.

Although sustainability is not a new idea, environmental concerns have started at the international level as a result of the development of industry, technology and the multiplicity of products. The global interest in societies in cementing the culture and concepts of sustainability has not been created in a vacuum, but the social and economic fluctuations and environmental disruptions that have taken place in the international arena with the beginning of the new millennium reflect the consequences of not taking these impacts into account in the business models of companies and various organizations. The issue of caring for the environment and promoting sustainability is the most vital and important issue for producers and designers in order to be able to understand the environmental consequences of industrial product use, and visualization can be the best solution to address these problems.

The aim of the research is to confirm and clarify the relationship between the concept of sustainability and the ways of achieving it with heritage and usability and their role in preserving the cultural and civilizational identity.

Key words:

Identity - Cultural Identity - Sustainability - Cultural Products.

Introduction:

The preservation of identity is one of the most important Arabian issues subjected to research and study, because of its importance and seriousness to our Arab nation, especially that we are living in the era of globalization. The new world order is characterized by the information revolution in various means of communication (Internet, which is aimed at the various fields of life (political, economic, social, and especially cultural). Therefore, we must preserve our cultural identity, which has been distinguished by a cultural and religious personality and a distinguished intellectual wealth that has manifested itself throughout the ages.

There is no doubt that all products of life have been greatly affected and the development and progress of the industrial sector have become the main measures of the economic, social and political progress of any country in the modern era, because the industrial sector was able to prove its presence in the local market, and if it is able to spread and market its products in its local markets, that will enhance its ability to compete with foreign goods and products at both domestic and international markets. Industrial enterprises have been doing their utmost to raise their competitiveness by improving the quality of their products and reducing cost as one of the most important economic determinants facing the process of marketing goods. The markets of products, especially the use of them are characterized in contemporary time with rapid fluctuations in the tastes, desires and tendencies of users, paying attention to the process of developing its products in proportion to the level of desires and needs of users, if not exceeded their expectations.

In this study, we will attempt to shed light on the relationship between the concept of sustainability in the use of life products and the affirmation of national identity so as not to completely dissolve our cultural identity in the face of globalization.

Research problem

The form of the product is one of the most important means of communication between the designer and the user in different markets and countries, where the design of the product form has an effective role to convey the culture and heritage, and the different models through the design lines of the form of products that may reflect the symbolic implications of the nature of the culture of the country and the designer, as the language of dialogue between the user in a country and between the product of the nature or the formal identity of the heritage of that country. The form of the final product is one of the most important design elements for the user, and the language of products plays an important role to accommodate the development in all aspects of daily life and users' needs, especially in the development of the user's products. This development takes place for both the designer and the user, forcing both of them to be familiar with the vocabulary of the process of communication and dialogue between them through the product. The role of designer became more important in obtaining the most ideal body for the most significant objective of the product function, and the use of the product, taking into account the psychological and allergic relationship between the man and the product. The elements of the shape are inspired by the different environments through form structures and aesthetic lines in the appearance of the products which play a major role in stimulating and attracting the consumer towards the acquisition of this product. In addition to the international trends in the design lines, which may be of great importance in the promotion of products among different people, especially when monitoring the popularity and

competition received by the products as a result of the tremendous technological development in the manufacture of products.

The phenomenon of the research is summarized in the following question: will the consideration of elements of sustainability in the design and used products confirm the national identity? Therefore, the research is subjected to the study of the concept of sustainability and the concept of cultural identity as well as the elements affecting the design of the product form and the extent of expression of symbolism, cultural identity and civilization as well as models that may distinguish the product and succeed in influencing the user or satisfy special desires in the acquisition of products of forms belonging to certain cultural roots and models.

Research goal

The aim of the research is to confirm and clarify the relationship between the concept of sustainability and the methods of achieving it considering heritage in the used products and their role in preserving cultural and cultural identity.

Research importance

Demonstrate the importance of the role of the designer in directing the design of the product and turning it into a language of dialogue among people that emphasizes the national identity or designs that address a culture or certain cultural models or national customs and traditions, thus increasing the shelf life of the product as one of the elements of achieving the concept of sustainability.

Search limits

The research covers all industrial life products.

First: the concept of identity

Since the beginning of mankind, people of the world have been keen to preserve their social, national, and cultural uniqueness. Therefore, they have an identity that helps to raise the profile of individuals in societies, and the presence of identity has contributed to increasing awareness of cultural and social self, which contributed to distinguishing people by their identity which is an integral part of the origin of individuals, because identity adds to the individual's privacy and self. It is also an image that reflects his culture, language, creed, civilization and history, and also contributes to building bridges of communication between all individuals within their communities, or with different communities, which is Partially dependent on the difference of languages, culture, intellect, or completely different in all fields without exception.

Identity is defined in language as a term derived from conscience, meaning human qualities and reality, and is also used to refer to the features and characteristics of the individual personality, idiomatic is defined as a set of characteristics owned by individuals, and contribute to make them achieve the character of individuality from others. Benefits are common to a community of people, whether within a society or a state. Another definition of identity is that it is something that is common to members of a specific group, or social group that contributes to the building of a country 's public sphere, and these individuals are treated according to their own identity.

The concept of identity is one of the concepts that we find it difficult to get a clear and specific definition for it. It is an ideological concept rather than a scientific concept, especially as identity can be expressed through features shared by the same group such as religion or nationality, language or race, and these features vary depending on the way they are used. Identification is a very difficult issue, today, the world has become more compatible and in solidarity. Technology is competing with the ability and competence of humans who try to adapt in a different and changing environment. The technological revolution severely reduced relationships among societies and created a special language and a different social identity. It is therefore possible for any society to lose its identity and personality once it interacts with one of these community environments, to become an individual in this new environment without identity or personality or distinctive culture, it has become an individual figure speaks a global language, these are the basic steps to become real world community, societies share and exchange information and religion as well.

Identity Types

Identity is divided into many types, each of which contributes to the reference of a term, or a certain idea about something, the most important types of identity are:

- National Identity: Identity used to refer to an individual's homeland, which is identified through a personal identity card that contains a set of information and data in which the individual belonging to a country is distinguished.
- Cultural identity: Identity that is related to the concept of culture in which a society is characterized, and depends directly on the language, as cultural identity is characterized by the transfer of the nature of language as one of the main factors in building the culture of individuals in society.
- Age Identity: Identity that contributes to the classification of individuals according to their age, and is divided into childhood, youth, masculinity, and middle age, and is usually used to refer to people in certain situations, such as receiving medical treatments.

Factors affecting identity building

There are a number of factors that affect the construction of identity among individuals, the most important of which are:

- Society: It is the first factor affecting the construction of identity, as the community contributes to building the identity of individuals and their formation based on the nature of the environment around them, and individuals are influenced by the behavior of previous generations, whether in the family, neighborhood, or society in general, it contributes to building their individual identity, and help them to understand themselves in a clearer way.
- Affiliation: is the link to the place that depends on the role of identity in the promotion of the concept, as the individual belongs to the state in which he lives and is considered a citizen of its citizens and has rights and a duty regulated by the provisions of the Constitution, and therefore identity is a mean of strengthening this belonging inside individuals and groups.

Cultural identity

It means in its general sense: "It is the process that distinguishes the individual himself from others, any identification of personality, and features that distinguish individuals from each other such as; name, nationality, family and professional status ³

In another definition, as defined by the French thinker (Alex Mikfili) Alex Mikelveli as: an integrated system of physical, psychological, moral and social data involving a pattern of processes of cognitive integration, and characterized by its unity, which is embodied in the inner spirit, which includes the characteristic sense of identity and sense ¹.

In order to determine the reference of Arab cultural identity, it is necessary to define a frame of reference for Arab identity based on the following:

1. "Religion: It is known that the idea of religion has been linked to human since its early existence, and it is considered one of the elements reflecting the identity of a society.
2. Custom: Custom is the frame of reference for any society, because it determines its privacy and identity and distinguishes it from other societies, as it varies from one community to another according to its nature and values.
3. Language: The language of any nation is the title of personality and identity, and a tool for expression and to translate thoughts, ideas and feelings, it is a mean for understanding, learning, development and transfer of experiences, cultures and civilizations.
4. Geography: Geography defines the natural boundaries of any nation, including origin, nationality and people, so that they are united by circumstances, fate and goals.

The most important features and elements of the Egyptian identity

These elements may differ in their external features from time to time, but they are of a unique and essential nature, characterized by pure Egyptian identity. A new cultural, and talk about the national character of our contemporary arts and the investigation of its features and characteristics, it is a manifestation of self-aspiration and a reference to the will to build a distinct personality that was able to give and take inspiration and the genius of the place to give in its great moments and during the history of Egypt which has been extended for thousands of years. The heritage originates from the overflow of the Egyptian personality and from the rhythm of Egypt's historical role, which created a great message in the making of civilization ¹.

Second: the concept of sustainability

Although sustainability is not a new idea, environmental concerns began at the international level as a result of the development of industry, technology, and product diversity. Increased awareness of environmental designers and manufacturers is one of the most important fundamentals of this environmental strategy as a result of the increasing environmental regulations due to the buying and use behavior of consumers. This has led the producing companies to improve their environmental performance in order to stay in the global markets among competing products. DFE Environment is one of the most effective strategies for companies to address production and process management challenges from designing to delivering the final product to the customer while providing new opportunities to solve and prevent environmental pollution problems through the product.

The idea of sustainability dates back to the early 1970s, with multiple designations for sustainable design, such as green design, environmental design and ecological design, all of these designations have the primary objective of taking the amount of impact the building has on the natural environment.

Sustainability is a Latin word for "To Hold Up", which means attribution from below. This site carries certain physical, cultural and spiritual qualities that deal with sustainability, hence

the term sustainability means: "the continuity of interaction between society and the ecosystem with high technology or it meets human needs at present without affecting the needs of future generations. "

We consider it important to practice sustainability and sustainable design. Recognize the value of culture as a factor that distinguishes both the social and physical environment - natural and structured. Collective self as a great value for development. However, cultural sustainability also expresses individual user orientations such as creativity, diversity and freedom of expression.

Therefore, this sustainability defends identity as one of the main concepts on which sustainable development is built not only through the promotion of the current material and social identity, but from the promotion of new individual and collective identities. This means, first; the means and resources of economy. Second; amplifying and unifying cultural values.

The concept of sustainable development

The concept of sustainable development can now be summarized on the use of natural resources (renewable and non-renewable) to meet our current needs without affecting the needs of future generations. Green procurement is an important component of sustainable development (i.e., when a user thinks of buying a product, he/she should think about the negative environmental impacts associated with the product during his or her entire life cycle), we find that environmentally preferable products are more expensive to buy than alternative products, which discourages green buying by consumers. Those who are looking for less expensive products without regard to environmental benefits, however, buying environmentally friendly products does not necessarily mean more cost, especially when considering other cost factors.

The basic axes of sustainability

Sustainable development has three basic axes that are considered the main pillars of which one of them is affected by the main objectives of development or sustainability, these axes are:

- Environment
- Economy
- Society

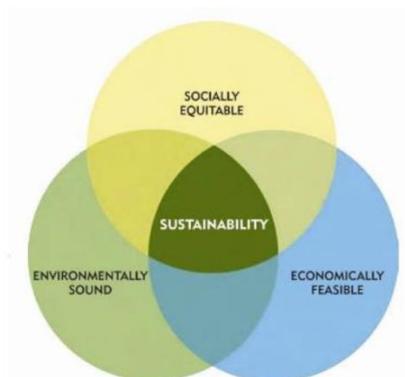


Figure (1) Illustrates the relationship between the basic axes of sustainable development

For the success of the sustainability process, these axes must be linked and integrated due to the close link among environment, economy and security. Social and economic improvements, and upgrading of social life commensurate with the preservation of basic components, natural life and long-term operations ¹¹.

It is clear from the foregoing the multiplicity of views expressing the concept of sustainability. Perhaps the best of these studies dealing with the development of a comprehensive framework for the concept and thought of sustainability are those mentioned in the famous Bert land report where sustainability was described as the possibility of bringing change and development required to meet the needs of the current society through environmental, economic and social guarantees to preserve the foundations of society for present and future generations. "

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Dr. Ismail Serag Eldin introduced a new definition of sustainability which is: "to provide future generations with an equal or greater amount of opportunities than the current generations". Social sustainability, architectural sustainability, and cultural sustainability as a way of life, is no doubt that the idea of sustainability can be applied to all these axes of different levels and disciplines and this is perhaps the secret of the strength of the idea of sustainability ¹.

Third: The relationship between sustainability and affirmation of national identity

Culture plays an important role in design, and the design of culture in modern products will serve as a trend for design in the global market. Clearly, we need a better understanding of intercultural communication, not only for the global market, but also for local design. While cross-cultural factors have become important issues for product design in the global economy, the intersection of design and culture becomes a major issue that makes both local design and the global market worthy of further in-depth study and shows the importance of studying culture repeatedly in many studies in all areas of design technology.

The preservation of culture, heritage and creative industries has become a key factor in promoting and achieving sustainability, which has become a key feature of development studies and policies.

Several United Nations global conventions (1954, 1970, 1972, 2001, 2003 and 2005) have been concluded to emphasize how culture can advance social and economic development, for example; the protection of cultural properties during armed conflicts with the regulations

implementing the Convention. 1970 Convention title was “the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property”, 1972 Convention for “the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage”, 2001 Convention for “the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage”, 2003 Convention for “the Protection of the Intangible Cultural Heritage”, diversity Cultural Expressions ¹.

Since we now live in a small world with a global market. As the market tends to be "globalized", design usually tends to localize so we have to think in line with the globalization of the market, with local design possibilities and it seems that putting local features in a product is more important in the global market where products lose their identity due to similarity in function and external shape. Therefore, adding and incorporating cultural features into the product is considered in order to enhance the identity of the product in the global market.

The design of cultural products has become a process to review or revise cultural features and then redefine the development required to design a new product to suit the community and works to satisfy consumers through culture and aesthetics, the use of cultural features to add value to the product is of high benefit to the growth yet it also can promote a unique local culture in the global marketplace. So how transferring cultural features into a cultural product has become a pressing problem today? and specialists have begun to propose cultural product design models that make it easier to understand the design of cultural products. (Faithful).

Based on the cultural product design model, the cultural product is designed using four steps: 1- verification (scenario development), 2- interaction (storytelling), 3- development (text writing), and 4- implementation (product design) as shown in the figure.

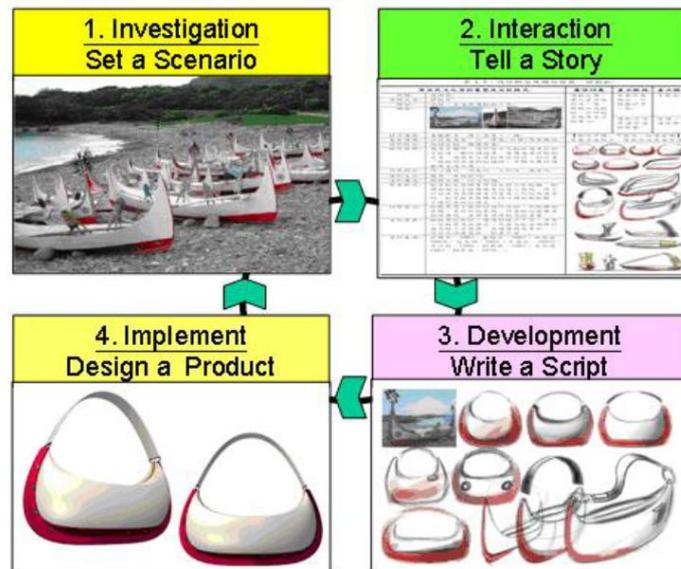


Figure (2) model of cultural product design

- Verification / (writing text): The first step is to find the main cultural attributes of the original cultural object and develop a scenario to suit the three levels: the outer level “tangible”, the “behavioral level”, and the intangible “inner level”. The scenario takes into account the general environment such as economic issues, social culture and applications of

modern technology, and this step tends to analyze the main cultural features to be included in the product.

- Interaction / storytelling: Based on the previous scenario, this step focuses on user-based observation to explore the socio-cultural environment in order to identify a product with a cultural meaning and style derived from the original cultural object. Therefore, some interactions should be explored in this step including the interaction between culture and technology, dialogue between users and designers, and understanding the user needs and cultural environment. Depending on the interaction, a user-centered approach is used to describe the user's need and product features through storytelling.
- Development / (Screenwriting): This step is the concept of development and access to design. The purpose of this step is to develop the drawing of ideas in the form of text and depicting through access to the scenario and the story during this process may be modified in the scenario and the story to convert the cultural meaning into a true cultural product Logically. This process provides a way to confirm or explain why the consumer needs the product? and how the product is designed to meet the needs of users?
- Implementation / (Product Design): This step addresses the specific cultural features of this stage. All cultural features must be included in a matrix table which will help designers to verify cultural features in the design process. In addition, the designer needs to evaluate the product features, shape and suitability. The designer makes changes to the prototype based on the results of the evaluation and the implementation of the prototype and further evaluations ¹.

Fourth: role of the designer in the confirmation of identity

Initially, the study approaches three main tasks for the designer through to perform in his design tasks in order to reach a product capable of competing, spreading and stay stable in the markets. This comes through directing the product and transforming it into a dialogue language between the designer and the user in all markets. These tasks are summarized as follows:

1) The shape of the product matches the international designs

There are many main driving forces that lead the designer to follow the global design lines, which include most of the used products and that may follow a certain design direction for some time, we call that term fashion or trend and these factors are:

- Globalization is sweeping the market and products are becoming more global.
- The proliferation of communication through computer networks and linking markets such as the internet make science more like a smaller village than ever it was before. As a result, the need for continuous development of goods and services has increased, and in many cases they are being bought and sold through electronic networks. This increases the need to be familiar with the applications of new technology, as it depends on meeting economic demand.
- International trade agreements and the ease of exchange of products among countries.
- Rapid technological change and lower transport and communication costs have made it more economical to integrate geographically dispersed processes, and to move products and components around the world in search for efficiency.
- Increased competition has forced industrial enterprises to discover new ways to increase their efficiency, including the use of new markets and the relocation of certain productive activities to reduce costs.

2) Product form and national identity confirmation

The designer may take a general direction in his design production emphasizing the customs of his country or a style that expresses its own civilization, which contributes significantly to the preservation of cultural and folklore, privacy of the people as well as its dissemination throughout the world, especially in light of the popularity of these heritage products in European and international markets. We therefore find it important to preserve the national identity and continue to innovate and withstand attempts to invade the identity of people through globalization. National identity is not meant to be used to convey symbols and symbolic elements of heritage, but usually the designer analyzes the basic lines expressing this heritage, style or civilization and incorporates them into design lines in an innovative way in building the shape or part of it to suggest the value of the product in the required direction. We find that the preservation of the Egyptian identity may come through the design lines that emphasize the Egyptian civilization or bear the character of the Pharaonic civilization or the basic symbolic elements of the distinctive forms of Pharaonic products (motifs), or Islamic or Coptic elements and their various decorations, or may take distinctive colors that have a special symbolic significance with a specific culture or habits that are psychologically related to the user. In addition to the effect of this on the revitalization of tourism movement and its requirements. There may be special requirements in the product for the final form and model to which it belongs in the case of preparing the product for export or display in touristic places or participate in international exhibitions. In this case, the designer must be familiar with the culture of his country and customs of its people and different prevailing styles in order to be able to utilize them in designs or select its distinct colors.

3) Product form oriented to specific people

In this case the product is directed to the external market only without selling in the local market, the designer must take the time to study the cultural, political, economic and environmental aspects of the target country through detailed marketing research. As long as the product is addressed to an open market, there are several questions related to the product itself that must be answered:

1. What is the purpose of the product? Is it a used product or games or entertainment product?
2. Does the product require user training?
3. Does the product need after-sale service and support?
4. What level of quality is required for the country of destination?
5. Is the product flexible enough to meet the wishes of different categories?
6. Does the product have a unique characteristic or is it comparable to other products?
7. Does the product relate to a specific time mark?
8. What is the selling price of the product and how competitive is it to other similar products?

The answer to these questions represents the general requirements of the product and the designer must be familiar with them to ensure the process of acceptance of the product. In this case, the purpose of the product should be determined and it should examine the characteristics of the user, age group and culture to determine the complexity of the product. Its export potential is high. Also, when exporting these types of products, the after sales support must be coordinated with the distributor or agent in the target country. This support may include spare parts, maintenance, training and warranty. Also, the specifications and

quality level required in developed countries should be specified (since the quality level required for developed countries is much higher than other countries), and some countries require certain procedures such as certain tests on the product, certain safety levels, special production technology and so on. Also the product that can be manufactured in many forms and models have a huge export opportunity to foreign markets where it can reach the largest possible number of customers, in addition to that the unique or distinctive product has a high export capacity and high competitive advantage, and elements of product excellence (innovation, technology, flexibility and ease of use, packaging and patents). The product may also be linked to a time marker such as holidays, religious events or national celebrations. In this case, the designer should study the customs and culture of the people who have the product and what products are required for these occasions. Tourist products taken from Pharaonic, Islamic, Coptic styles, etc. ¹.

The quality of the products depends not only on the negative environmental and life effects, which is one of the priorities of sustainable design, which prolongs the useful life of the product, but also on the ability of the product to attract the interest and acceptance of the user and raise up to the desire to acquire the product and persuade through its external appearance and consumer awareness of the advantages of using this particular product in terms of raw materials and production methods as well as residues after the end of its useful life. The appearance of the product depends on the analysis of the semantics and the perceptions of the consumer compared to similar products and then take the opinion of the consumer through market and product researches, which are supposed to help in reaching an indicator of the user acceptance of the new product.

We find that changing specifications, shapes and global trends in design and short life is one of the biggest problems facing sustainable design.

Fifth: Conclusions & Recommendations

Based on the above and given the importance of studies to confirm the national identity and the strong impact on the process of product design, which achieves the process of sustainability of the product and acquiring the culture of the country, so in order to not limit the term sustainability to the environmental side only, the research reached the following:

- The relationship between identity and sustainability in its modern value emphasizes the need to use the approach of adding originality to modern designs to achieve an integrated balance in the current trends of sustainable development without causing an imbalance in identity.
- Activating the role of designers in emphasizing the relationship of culture and the identity of the community with design, this in turn leads to cultural sustainability and affirmation of national identity.
- The need to rebuild human relations at all levels of society through the promotion and empowerment of social relations and increased interaction in places of living (public or private) and the development of products and designs that promote cultural and national identity, taking into account the integration and redistribution of benefits and resources as one way to achieve sustainable development.
- The need to explore the mechanisms and resources that countries use to build national identity from designs, as this will help the designer to expand options and see the effects of design on the user.

- The product must ultimately reflect a distinct and unique identity that is authentic and innovative.

The research therefore recommends:

- Conducting awareness programs targeting the society emphasizing the importance of both national and cultural identity.
- Expand and complete the study of how to activate the identity and update the terms of development and sustainability according to local identity.
- Research centers and industries should be adopting the issue of the cultural product which is belonging to the identity of its country to become the consumer favorite product.
- Increased awareness of what a sustainable product is through the media - research centers - websites in light of the spread of modern means of communication and knowledge.
- Work to address the problem of having small number of actual product designers due to the dependence of developing countries on importing from abroad.
- The designer should be familiar with national styles and patterns as well as the distinctive features and characteristics of his country's civilizations.
- Develop and analyze the distinctive elements or models of civilizations to facilitate the process of integrating them in the design lines and guide the form of the product to suggest the desired model.
- The extent to which the final form is related to the function while maintaining the required identity.

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