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Print Media: Analyzing Indian Customers' Perspective & Satisfaction Level Using CSI

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Abstract:

Customer satisfaction is the major driver of the commercial relationship between a newspaper and its reader. With the onslaught of the online media, it has become imperative for newspapers to provide top class service, contents, presentation etc. to keep their readership and circulation high. The current study identifies the factors considered important by customers in choosing the newspaper they subscribe to. News coverage (content) came out to be the most important factor in choosing a newspaper followed by quality of writing and supplements provided. Analysis of the impact of demographics in influencing importance of various factors showed gender, occupation and income to significantly affect the importance that different customers attach to the different parameters. Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) was calculated to find out the gap between importance and satisfaction with different factors and to find out the overall satisfaction of customers with newspapers. The satisfaction level came out to be 74%.

Keywords: CSI, Newspapers, Demographics, Customer Satisfaction

1. Introduction

With the advent of digital media, the newspaper industry all across the world has seen a decline. In the West, the Internet has made a dent in newspaper circulation and advertising revenue, but in India, it hasn't happened yet (The New Indian Express, 2015). This could be attributed to the lack of internet access in 80 percent of the country because of which newspapers, which can be distributed and accessed for less than 120 rupees (\$2) a month, are much more accessible to the customers. In order to continue to maintain their popularity, what is required is for the newspaper industry to be aware of the perception and satisfaction level of Indian customers with the newspapers that they read. An idea of the factors considered important by the customers in their patronage of a newspaper and their satisfaction level with the same will be helpful for the newspaper companies to enhance the quality of their newspapers and thereby their circulation.

The present study has been undertaken to gain an insight into the factors looked for by the Indian customers while deciding to subscribe to a particular newspaper and their satisfaction level with their current newspaper. Attempt has also been made to analyze if the importance attached to the different factors differs on the basis of the different demographic characteristics of the customers. The findings of the study would be helpful for the newspaper companies in improving the value of the newspapers (both print and online version) for the customers. Since the amount of revenue they can generate through advertisements also depends on the level of popularity and circulation of the newspaper, increase in quality leading to increase in customer acceptance will also be helpful in increasing the revenue stream for the newspaper companies.

The current paper will begin with an introduction to the newspaper industry. The following sections present successively the objectives of the study, research design, and analysis of the research findings and end with conclusion and implications of the study.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. The Indian Newspaper Industry

While across the world the newspaper industry is sensing a rapid decline in sales, the situation is quite the opposite in India (MSG, 2015). With the dawn of internet and mobile media, print newspapers are experiencing decreasing readership, but the state of affairs is not so serious in India because internet in India is still not as omnipresent as in the developed countries. More than 107 million copies of newspapers were circulated daily across India in 2009, according to the World Association of Newspapers, and it's estimated that one in every five daily newspapers in the world is published in the country.

India is one of the top countries in the world in the sales of newspapers (World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers, 2011)

Top countries by newspaper sales

1. India
2. China
3. Japan
4. United States
5. Germany

(Source: World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers)

Across the world, the revenue decline for the newspaper industry is expected to end, according to the Global Entertainment and Media Outlook Report by Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC). It forecasts that newspaper revenue will start to rise again as growth begins to surpass decline in mature markets, and that growth will become stable at 0.1% through to 2018. The report highlights that this advance will be more prominent in the Asia-Pacific market which is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3.4% through to 2018, with China (8.3% CAGR) and India (7.5% CAGR) doing best of all.

2.1.1. Reasons for Popularity of Newspapers in India

The increasing popularity of newspapers in India in contrast to the decline being witnessed in the West can be attributed to a number of features unique to the Indian market. Some of these reasons are enumerated below:

2.1.2. Low Internet Penetration

One of the key reasons for the widespread popularity of newspapers in India is the low penetration of internet particularly outside the major urban cities. In the west, the dissemination of the internet, mobile smartphones and other digital devices is highly prevalent because of which many people prefer to read the news online or on their smartphones and gadgets. In contrast, in India, internet access is still not existent in most of the areas outside the urban cities and towns and even in the cities and towns having good internet access smartphones and other digital gadgets are still expensive by Indian standards (BBC, 2011). Therefore, the only way for people to keep up with the daily happenings and the news apart from through TV news channels is through newspapers.

2.1.3. Social Structure of India

India is a country with people speaking many languages and dialects. Given the variation and variety of languages in the country, a huge market exists for many regional newspapers as for most of the people in towns and the rural areas, the newspaper remains the primary source of information as even now the regional TV channels do not cover all areas (MSG, 2015).

2.1.4. Increased Literacy

One of the factors mediating the growth of newspaper circulation and readership in the smaller towns of India is its young and aspiring population. The education drives over the past few decades and the impetus being given to education through various schemes has seen a marked rise in literacy rates, which elevated from 65 percent to 74 percent in a decade ending in 2011 (The New Indian Express, 2015). Augmented literacy is one of the major reasons for the upsurge in newspaper readership in India. Almost one-third of India's 579 million literate population is said to read a newspaper now, according to KPMG analysis (BBC, 2011).

2.1.5. Home Delivery

One of the unique aspects of the newspaper market in India is that newspapers in India are delivered free of cost to the doorsteps of the readers. This is in contrast to the West, where the distribution charge is distinct and thus the cost of the newspaper is more (Razgaitis, 2013).

2.1.6. Low Cost of Newspaper

"Price of a newspaper in India is almost one tenth of that in America or in the UK which makes it possible for a middle class family to buy more than one newspaper on a daily basis. (BBC, 2011). Thus, they can have one English newspaper, one regional language one and even a business newspaper if their occupation so demands. The major reason behind the low cost of newspapers in India is because of the fact that newspapers in India are prepared from recycled newsprint, which means that the paper once read by the customer and thereafter sold to the 'radhi wala' in due course is transferred to the paper mills where it is recycled. This entails that the cost of the newspaper is cheaper in India. In addition to this, the Indian government subsidizes the newsprint products, which further reduces the cost of a newspaper. In the west, the circumstances are opposite to this, as on one hand recycling of newspapers does not transform into the same recycled newsprint being used for further printing and on the other hand newsprint expenditure incurred by the newspapers are not subsidized as well (MSG, 2015).

2.2. Previous Studies Related to Newspapers

On the basis of a review of previous studies related to newspapers, the following section presents an overview of previous research categorized into 2 parts:

- i. Studies analyzing customer perspective related to print newspapers.
- ii. Studies bringing forth the increasing threat of online newspapers to offline ones.

2.2.1. Studies Analyzing Customer Perspective Related to Print Newspapers

The study undertaken by Gupta & Gokhale in 2012, identified the satisfaction level and perception of the customers in the Nagpur region of India. In their study, they found that the satisfaction level of the customers is effected by the coverage, supplements and sports coverage by the newspapers.

Tewksbury and Althaus (2000) in their study discovered that those customers who read print newspapers recollected relatively more public affairs stories and more details than those who were exposed to the online editions.

Tewksbury and Althaus in their study of 2000, examined how relative to traditional newspapers, Internet-based papers provide fewer cues about news story importance and give readers more control over story selection. As a result, readers of an online paper may acquire less information about national, international, and other news covered.

Srivastava & Srivastava in 2015, conducted a study in which they focused on readers' interest and approach towards digital and conventional newspapers. The objectives of the research were to identify the basic reasons for reading the news, to analyse the possible impact of the reasons identified on the decision to read online or conventional newspapers, and finally, to study the possible relation between both types of news media.

Mersey, Malthouse & Calder, in their study of 2012, questioned if satisfaction is the only, or even the critical, thing to focus on with readership? Their research indicated two other related constructs - reader experiences and engagement, affect reader behavior even more than does satisfaction. The study provided examples of how to increase engagement and advocated experimental research to understand how news organizations can positively affect engagement and thereby readership.

Jan Kreft's study of 2016 aimed at the presentation of the research results and the analysis of the research on changes in media consumption, with a particular consideration of printed media, carried out in Poland in the years 2007 – 2015.

As evident, not many studies are available which analyze customer perception and satisfaction level with newspapers. The current study is an attempt to fill this gap.

2.2.2. Studies Bringing Forth the Increasing Threat of Online Newspapers to Offline Ones

A number of studies in the past couple of years, have brought forth the increasing acceptance and adoption of online media as a source for their information and news needs (Chyi & Sylvie, 1998, Dutta-Bergman, 2004, Flavian & Gurra, 2006, Wise et al, 2008, Yang & Chyi, 2011, Xu et al, 2014). Hennig-Thurau et al. in their study of 2010, introduced a new "pinball" framework of new media's influence on associations with customers and recognized crucial new media phenomena which companies should take into account when managing their dealings with customers in the new media world. Joshi in her study of 2012 investigated the effect of deployment of information technology in print media while Chung in his study of 2008 identified the interactive features of online newspapers which have made them more attractive to customers in comparison to print newspapers. XU et al in their study of 2014, examine consumers' news consumption behavior on mobile news websites in response to the introduction of a mobile news app and bring forth how the increasing acceptance might be a threat to print newspapers.

Given the threat being witnessed by print newspapers from the increasing adaptation to online media, the current study becomes important for the newspaper companies to understand what factors should they work upon and pay attention to, to satisfy their customers and consequently to be able to not only maintain their status quo but also to increase the readership and circulation of the printed newspapers and in turn the revenue generated from advertisements.

3. Objectives of the Current Study

The current research has been carried out to understand the satisfaction level of Indian customers with the newspapers that they read. Specifically, the main objectives of the research are:

- i. To understand the factors considered important in choosing a newspaper
- ii. To analyze if the importance attached to the parameters differs according to different demographic variables.
- iii. To interpret the difference in importance attached to various parameters by the different demographic groups
- iv. To find out the overall satisfaction level of customers with newspapers in general by using the technique of CSI

4. Research Design

The present study is an exploratory study carried out to find out the Indian customers' perspective related to print newspapers. Primary survey method of data collection was used for the present study. A structured questionnaire was administered to 500 customers. The preliminary draft of the questionnaire prepared for the study was given for appraising to a couple of experts in the field. The questionnaire was then pilot tested with 60 respondents. Based on the results of the pilot test, vague questions were removed and several alternative questions were introduced. Questions in the final questionnaire related to the factors considered important by customers in choosing a newspaper, their satisfaction level with these factors and their demographic characteristics. For measuring the importance attached to the different parameters and satisfaction level of the customers with respect to the various aspects of newspapers, the respondent indicated his or her level of importance/satisfaction with the various aspects on a four-point scale (highly unimportant/dissatisfied (1) to highly important/satisfied (4)).

5. Analysis and Findings

5.1. Understanding the Factors Considered Important in Choosing a Newspaper

As can be seen from table 1, news coverage (content) plays the most important role in choosing a newspaper followed by quality of writing and supplements provided. This can well be attributed to the fact that newspapers are a major source of information which can be accessed without any need for Internet connectivity or digital devices. This is due to the fact that majority of people in India still do not have access to Internet because of high cost of Internet and digital devices. People still prefer reading newspapers as one of their favorite leisure time activities apart from them being an awareness and knowledge creation source. This implies that the customers want value for money and look for a newspaper which covers a wider span of news and is able to provide diversified content. The quality of writing plays a very important role as newspapers are considered to be one of the most important source in improving command over language apart from knowledge enhancement. The customer perceives the supplement to be providing extra information either included in the price of newspaper or being available at a discounted rate in the bundled form. This perception brings in higher satisfaction. The number of advertisements is still not a driving force for choosing a newspaper and is considered the least important by the customers.

Kendall's W Test		Test Statistics	
Factors of Importance	Mean Rank	N	500
Importance of news coverage	4.36	Kendall's W(a)	0.261
Importance of quality and availability of supplements	4.06	Chi-Square	651.322
Importance of presentation style	3.96	Df	5
Importance of variety and number of sections	3.75	Asymp. Sig.	0.000
Importance of contests	2.56	a. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance	
Importance of no. of advertisements	2.31		

Table 1: Factors considered important in choosing a newspaper

5.2. Analyzing the Influence of Different Demographic Variables on Importance Attached to the Parameters

In order to identify if the importance attached to the parameters differs according to the different demographic variables, crosstab analysis was run between demographic variables and importance attached to parameters. The asymptotic significance observed through Chi-Square test is listed in Table 2.

It can be seen from the table, that some of the demographic variables significantly influence the importance attached to the different parameters at 95% significance level. The same have been highlighted in the table. As can be seen, Gender significantly effects the importance level attached to news coverage and presentation style along with contests.

Occupation groups were also found to be significantly influencing importance attached to presentation style along with variety and number of sections available. The income based demographic groups was found to significantly differ in importance attached to all the parameters except new coverage. Demographic wise difference in importance attached to various parameters is further explained in tables 3, 4, and 5.

Significance Observed (Asymp. Sig.)	Age	Gender	Occupation	Income
News Coverage	0.790	0.000	0.024	0.099
Presentation style	0.774	0.000	0.001	0.000
Number of advertisement	0.412	0.075	0.380	0.000
Variety and number of sections	0.124	0.429	0.000	0.000
Quality & availability of supplements	0.405	0.870	0.146	0.003
Contests (tambola, scratch contests)	0.787	0.000	0.603	0.003

Table 2: Asymptotic significance of demographic variable on importance attached

5.3. Interpreting the Difference in Importance Attached to Various Parameters by the Different Demographic Groups

It can be seen from table 3, that though both males and females attach high importance to news coverage in their choice of a newspaper, females attach more importance than males to both news coverage and presentation style in choosing the newspaper to subscribe to. 74% and 54% of the females associate high importance to news coverage and presentation style respectively in comparison to males wherein 52% and 33% of the males give high importance to these two parameters. This is understandable as females are not interested in just one type of news but rather prefer a higher variety of news like coverage of news in the area of movies, television serials, cosmetics and the likes more than just political, business and sports coverage. Both males and females do not attach high importance to contests in their choice of a newspaper, with 48% of the males and 68% of the females considering it to be unimportant. This could be because the main purpose of a newspaper is to get news and information and contests can only be considered as sales promotion tools for increasing short term sales.

Parameters	Gender	Highly Unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Highly Important
News coverage	Male	5.22%	19.57%	23.04%	52.17%
	Female	5.56%	6.30%	14.07%	74.07%
Presentation style	Male	13.91%	13.04%	39.57%	33.48%
	Female	3.70%	6.67%	35.19%	54.44%
Contests	Male	21.74%	26.52%	27.39%	24.35%
	Female	32.96%	35.19%	24.81%	7.04%

Table 3: Gender-wise importance attached to different parameters

As can be seen from the table 4, all the groups under occupation associate high importance to presentation style of the newspaper with the highest percentage of respondents associating high importance to presentation style being employed in the private sector. This could be because being in the private sector, they prefer a presentation style which is more convenient and easy and quick to go through since they have less time at their disposal to go through the whole newspaper in detail. As far as variety and number of sections is concerned, the percentage of respondents belonging to all categories of occupation consider it to be important to highly important. This is understandable as no matter what the occupation one belongs to, they would like to keep abreast with information and news related to as many areas as possible which would give them an edge over others.

Parameters	Occupation	Highly Unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Highly Important
Presentation style	Student	6.40%	11.20%	41.60%	40.80%
	Business	12.00%	14.40%	36.00%	37.60%
	Govt. Service	11.20%	12.00%	31.20%	45.60%
	Pvt. Service	4.00%	0.80%	40.00%	55.20%
Variety and number of sections	Student	2.40%	19.20%	44.00%	34.40%
	Business	2.40%	23.20%	51.20%	23.20%
	Govt. Service	1.60%	10.40%	70.40%	17.60%
	Pvt. Service	0.00%	8.00%	57.60%	34.40%

Table 4: Occupation-wise importance attached to different parameters

Table 5, lists down the importance associated with various parameters by the different income groups. It can be seen that like occupation groups, all the income groups also attach high level of importance to the style of presentation in the newspaper for its acceptability along with variety and number of sections available in the newspaper. Moreover, high level of importance is also attached to the quality and availability of supplements by all the income groups alike. However, it was seen that almost all income groups do not attach too much importance to number of advertisements and contests floated while choosing the newspaper they would like to subscribe to. Thus, it can be concluded that people from all income groups give high level of importance to presentation style, variety and number of sections and to quality and availability of supplements. This could be because the cost of newspapers in India is not very high thus, irrespective of the income group, generally customers attach more importance to these factors in choosing the newspaper. These three factors influence and make up the major image of the newspaper in the minds of the customers and are thus instrumental in increasing its popularity if found to be attractive. Advertisements and contests were generally found to be unimportant influencers of customer choice which could be the customers while purchasing a newspaper are looking for information and coverage of news and not for the advertisements or the contests floated by the newspaper.

Parameters	Income	Highly Unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Highly Important
Presentation style	<10K	6.84%	17.09%	29.91%	46.15%
	10K-30K	8.85%	9.23%	33.85%	48.08%
	>30K	8.94%	3.25%	51.22%	36.59%
No of advertisements	<10K	23.08%	31.62%	19.66%	25.64%
	10K-30K	28.46%	40.38%	20%	11.15%
	>30K	22.76%	47.97%	25.20%	4.07%
Variety and number of sections	<10K	5.13%	23.93%	42.74%	28.21%
	10K-30K	0.77%	15%	56.15%	28.08%
	>30K	0%	7.32%	67.48%	25.20%
Quality & availability of supplements	<10K	4.27%	18.80%	38.46%	38.46%
	10K-30K	1.54%	6.15%	50%	42.31%
	>30K	0%	12.20%	43.90%	43.90%
	Total	1.80%	10.60%	45.80%	41.80%
Importance of contests	<10K	33.33%	29.06%	23.08%	14.53%
	10K-30K	28.08%	29.62%	22.69%	19.62%
	>30K	21.95%	36.59%	35.77%	5.69%

Table 5: Income-wise importance attached to different parameters

5.4. Finding Overall Satisfaction Level of Customers with Newspapers in General by Using the Technique of CSI

Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) technique was applied on various dimensions of newspaper choice/reading to measure overall satisfaction level of customers with newspaper. CSI characterizes the overall satisfaction level of customers as a percentage.

CSI is computed by first calculating the average of all the (importance) weightings given by the customer. The individual weightings are then divided by this average to arrive at the weighting on the basis of average of 1. Customer's higher priorities are weighted more than 1 and lower priorities less than 1. The satisfaction scores are then multiplied by these weights to arrive at the weighted score. The average of this weighted score is the CSI.

Parameters	Importance (A)	Satisfaction (B)	Gap	C = (A/Average of A)	D=B*C
News coverage	3.408	3.292	0.116	1.1718	3.858
Presentation style	3.184	3.1	0.084	1.0948	3.394
No. of advertisements	2.21	2.678	-0.468	0.7599	2.035
Variety and no. of sections	3.09	3.088	0.002	1.0625	3.281
Quality and availability of supplements	3.276	3.066	0.21	1.1264	3.454
Contests	2.282	2.498	-0.216	0.7846	1.960
Average	2.903	2.954			2.997
CSI =					74.920
<i>Since the scale used was 1-4, CSI = 2.997 / 4 * 100= 74.92%</i>					
Scale for Importance	1: Highly Unimportant; 2: Unimportant; 3: Important; 4: Highly Important				
Scale for Satisfaction	1: Highly Dissatisfied; 2: Dissatisfied; 3: Satisfied; 4: Highly Satisfied				
A: Average importance (weighting) assigned by all customers for each parameter					
B: Average satisfaction scores assigned by all customers for each parameter					
C: Weighting based on average of 1 = individual (importance) weighting/average (importance) weighting					
D: Weighted score = satisfaction score * average importance weighting = B * C					
Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) = Average of Weighted Scores (D)					

Table 6: Calculating Satisfaction Level

Table 6 shows the Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) of the customers with the newspapers which comes out to be 74.92% which is quite high for the newspaper industry. There are still two areas, namely, Number of advertisements and Contests, where negative gap is seen between the importance attached and the satisfaction derived as per figure 1. With the impending growth of digital newspapers, it is important for the print media to understand the need of the customers and work on the gap areas so that they can be plugged within time and they are able to withstand competition from rising digital newspaper industry.

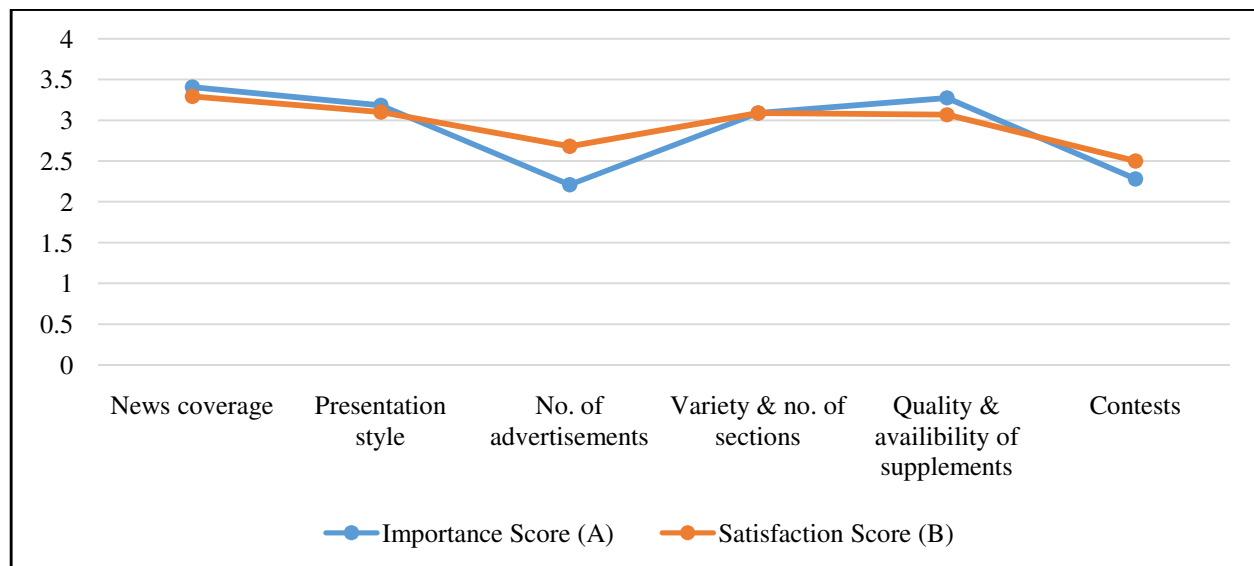


Figure 1: Perception Gap Mapping on Importance attached by Customers

6. Conclusion and Implications

The findings of the study highlight that though the customers are quite satisfied with newspapers in India in general, steps can be taken to increase the customer satisfaction level still higher.

Since news coverage was found to be the most important in influencing customers' choice of a newspaper, the newspaper companies should take advantage of this finding and work on increasing their news coverage to cover more aspects and issues.

Quality and availability of supplements being the second most important influencing factor shows the demand of the customers for more varied coverage maybe in the form of supplements related to property, education, branding, festivals etc. So if the newspaper companies are able to provide these in good quality, the satisfaction level of the customers is bound to go up.

Since number of advertisements got the lowest importance, it can be perceived as a thinking on the part of the customers that if so much space is being utilized for advertisements, rigor and coverage of news items must be getting compromised.

As presentation style is a parameter which is being given different level of importance by different demographic groups, satisfaction level of the customers can be increased by making the presentation style as per the liking of the group of customers who attach more importance to it.

Gender and Occupation were found to be significantly impacting the importance customers attach with news coverage. Since females were found to attach more importance to it, care should be taken by the newspaper companies to include news items that would attract females. As all occupation groups were found to be attaching high importance to news coverage, the newspapers should have a pertinent mix of news which are relevant to all occupation groups.

The findings related to CSI, show that the overall satisfaction level of customers with newspapers is quite high at 74%. But if the newspapers want to successfully meet the onslaught of digital competition, efforts should be made to further increase this satisfaction level by focusing on the parameters considered important by the customers. The negative gap between satisfaction and importance in reference to number of advertisements and contests should not worry the companies too much because generally customers attach low importance to these factors in their choice of a newspaper.

Thus, though the Indian newspaper industry is booming despite the industry facing a major slump in the west, the current study can be helpful to the newspaper companies in gaining an insight into the requirements of the customers and can help them in focusing on the areas which can increase the readership, circulation and subscription of their newspapers.

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