

Celebrity Endorsement & Brand Perception

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Abstract

Brand is the most valuable asset of any company and promoting the product of that company through a brand ambassador can enhance brand value or equity which in turn can be leveraged through brand extension. Although brand personality also nourishes brands to gain market share, command premium price and insulates from discounting brands. Endorsing brands of any products through a well-known personality has become very prominent these days as they sort out the problem of over communication, provides instant recognition and transfers their goodwill to the brand. There are some theories like Source Credibility Theory, Source Attractiveness Theory and Meaning Transfer Theory which provide a transparent methodology of celebrity endorsement which explains how the process of the celebrity endorsement influences the minds of the consumers. As we know, many industries invest huge amounts of money as advertising expenditure for hiring the right celebrity. However there lies uncertainty with respect to the returns that the company might be able to garner for the brand. The issue of matching the values of the celebrity with the brand values is also very important, i.e. getting the right celebrity to endorse the right brand. In this way consumers perceive the brand as having superior quality because it has been endorsed by a credible source. This makes endorsement as one of the indicators of quality for any brand. Corporate credibility along with endorser credibility plays a significant role in the attitude of the consumer towards the brand and the advertisement respectively. On the other hand, the over popularity of the celebrity sometimes overshadows the brand. When the celebrity is involved in multiple endorsements, it tends to create confusion among consumers and hence adversely affects the perception of the advertisement and the brand. In this article we tried to propose the usefulness of different theories in celebrity endorsement for different Indian brands.

Keywords: Attractiveness; Brand; Celebrity Endorsement; Perception; Source Credibility

Introduction

Brand is the most valuable asset of any company and promoting the product of that company through a brand ambassador can enhance brand value or equity which in turn can be leveraged through brand extension (Padamsee, 2007). Although brand personality also nourishes brands to gain market share, command premium price and insulates from discounting brands. Endorsing brands of any products through a well-known personality has become very prominent these days as they sort out the problem of over communication, provides instant recognition and transfers their goodwill to the brand. Earlier this exercise was exclusively performed within the domain of models but with the advent of celebrities in Hindi movies and of Sports since the late nineteenth century they ventured out into their bastion. The first endorsement was made by the then cricketer named Farokh Engineer who worked as a model for Bryl cream.

Today the society is becoming more dynamic in terms communication and entertainment though the companies are fighting themselves for putting their brands in the customer mind.

Moreover the branded products are framing the advertisement copy in a different format to attract the attention of the customer. As per the secondary information, a typical super-market in USA displays more than 12000 brands, an American family has at least one television set and a consumer is exposed to around 1000 ads per day (Friedman & Friedman, 1979). Likewise, there are around 130 television channels in India broadcasting over 3 million television commercials each year in India. The media-explosion can thus be easily demonstrated. Moreover, people forget 80% of the information in just 24 hours by the habits of zipping and zapping of advertisements in television. Just imagine the plight of the marketer to make their brand shout over the deafening clutter of all the brands. In this way in 1980, Indian marketers found the solution of 'Celebrity Endorsement' for the brand, which may give a different taste to the customer (Chung-kue Hsu & Daniella McDonald, 2002).

Companies endorse celebrity for a variety of reasons whether it is the life experience of the celebrity that fits the advertising message or the endorser's high appeal with the company's consumer target group. Studies associated with the market effect of celebrity endorsement suggest that consumers positively value the use of celebrity endorsers in the advertisements. Companies invest significant money in putting together brands and organizations with endorser qualities such as attractiveness, likeability, and trustworthiness. But today's dynamic market conditions make these investments unviable (Goldsmith, Lafferty and Newell, 2000).

Objective of the study

1. To study the role of celebrities on different brands and their impact on customers.
2. To explore the consumer perception on different brands.
3. To analyze the different theories on celebrity endorsement and its application on different brands
4. To study the positive and negative impact on celebrity endorsement on different brands.

Review of literature

Brand

Brand is the proprietary visual, emotional, rational and cultural image that can be associated with a company or the product. Some examples will bring the fantastic meaning i.e. Amul - utterly butterly delicious; Coke – thanda matlab coca-cola; Pepsi – Yeh dil mange more; Kurkure- Masti bole to kurkure and so on. These examples convey one message that when people watch advertisement communication is being created and result is that people go for experience of buying. People feel by using the brand they will portray certain traits or characteristics that otherwise they do not have. This generates a certain level of emotional affiliation and a sense of fulfillment as well as this creates emotional relationship with brands that make them so powerful.

Advertisements enforces what exactly the brand stands for and what to expect by its consumption and above all what factors, features and attributes makes it better from competition. Advertisements along with other marketing efforts generate expectations and feelings in a customer and force them to think when they see or hear the brand name. This Thinking process and emotional bonding gets more mature and relevant when a celebrity endorses the brand. The subjective intangible feelings of a customer become objective and tangible in the form of celebrity and the level of expectations will rise. The customer will start to perceive himself in the reference frame of the celebrity after the brand or the

advertised product has been purchased or consumed by him (Joseph, 1982).

Celebrity

Celebrities are people who enjoy public recognition and mostly they are the experts of their respective fields having wider influence in public life and societal domain. Attributes like attractiveness, extraordinary life style or special skills, larger than life image and demigod status can be associated with them (Atkins, Charles and Martin Block, 1983). It is safe to deduce that within a corresponding social group all the celebrities generally differ from the social norm and enjoy high degree of public awareness. As we know celebrities appear in public in different ways. To start, they appear in public when fulfilling their professional commitments example: Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who played cricket in front of an audience in Twenty-Twenty World Cup. Furthermore, celebrities appear in public by attending special celebrity events, example: the movie award nights; special screening; world premieres of movies or for social causes. These celebrities have universal presence and appeal, they are present everywhere, in news, fashion shows and magazines, tabloids and above all advertisements (Brian & Busler, 1998).

Celebrity and a Brand

The star power in India can be gauged by the successful endorsements done by Shahrukh Khan (Pepsi, Hyundai Santro, Sun feast, and Navratan etc.), Amitabh Bachchan, Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, Hrithik Roshan, Amir Khan and the others. The inevitable question is, if and how the lively interest of the public in the rich and famous can be efficiently and effectively used by companies to promote their brands and consequently to increase their sales revenues. This fact can be brought out by using certain examples i.e. Mr. Amitabh Bachchan promoting Cadbury chocolates after the fiasco of infestation when the image of Cadbury India went very low in the eyes of people. Soon the company found a perfect fit and a reliable celebrity to transmit the correct message and help regenerating the lost trust. The fit between the product and celebrity is evident as Mr. Bachchan and Cadbury chocolates both have tested troubled times and still they stand tall and the love and trust they both share with the people all across India. This is a live example of how a celebrity brought certain attributes to a product like chocolate (Madhukar, 2007).

Shahrukh khan has also endorsed various diversified products. His endorsement basket is ranging from Hyundai Santro to Sun feast biscuits on one hand and from Compaq computers to Videocon electronics on the other. According to Advertising research companies both the actors are doing well and the ad spent on both by the companies is increasing at a phenomenal rate, so does their basket of endorsements. These actors bring reliability and trust in the brand and above all, they help in increasing the sales revenues. Celebrity endorsements are powerful, has become evident from the above attributes (McCracken & Grant, 1989).

TABLE-1 (Endorsers and their attributes)

Endorser	Attributes
Amitabh Bachchan	Professional ,Charismatic, Versatile

Shahrukh Khan	Resilient , Stylish ,Youth Icon ,Energetic
Sachin	Excellence, Determination, Faith, Hard work
Rahul Dravid	Mr. Dependable(Reliable, Composed)
M. S. Dhoni	Power play, Calmness
Alia Bhatt	Youthful, Cute
Tiger Shroff	Energy, Physically Fit, Acrobat

Growth of Celebrity Endorsements

After 1980, it became the burgeoning of a new trend in India– brands started being endorsed by celebrities. Hindi film and TV stars as well as sportspersons were roped in to endorse prominent brands. Advertisements, featuring stars like Tabassum (Prestige pressure cookers), Jalal Agha (Pan Parag), Kapil Dev (Palmolive Shaving Cream) and Sunil Gavaskar (Dinesh Suitings) became common in Indian advertising market. Probably, the first ad to cash in on star power in a strategic, long-term, mission statement kind of way was Lux soap. This brand has, perhaps as a result of this, been among the top three in the country for much of its lifetime.

Also, we had the Shahrukh Khan-Santro campaign with the objective of mitigating the impediment that an unknown Korean brand faced in the Indian market. The objective was to garner faster brand recognition, association and emotional unity with the target group. Star power in India can be gauged by the successful endorsement done by Shahrukh for three honchos- Pepsi, Clinic All Clear and Santro. Similarly, when S Kumars used Hrithik Roshan, then the hottest advertising icon for their launch advertising for Tamarind, they reckoned they spent 40 - 50 per cent less on media due to the sheer impact of using Hrithik. Ad recall was as high as 70 per cent, and even the normally conservative trade got interested (Devashish, 2003). In the Indian context, it would not be presumptuous to state that celebrity endorsements can aggrandize the overall brand. We have numerous examples exemplifying this claim. A standard example here is Coke, which, till recently, didn't use stars at all internationally. In fact, India was a first for them. The result was a ubiquitously appealing Aamir cheekily stating Thanda matlab Coca Cola. The recall value for Nakshatra advertising is only due to the sensuous Aishwarya. The Parker pen brand, which by itself commands equity, used Amitabh Bachchan to revitalize the brand in India. India is one country, which has always idolized the stars of the celluloid world. Therefore it makes tremendous sense for a brand to procure a celebrity for its endorsement. In India there is an exponential potential for a celebrity endorsement to be perceived as genuinely relevant, thereby motivating consumers to go in for the product. This would especially prove true if the endorser and the category are a natural lifestyle fit like sportspersons and footwear, Kapil-Sachin and Boost or film stars and beauty products.

TABLE- 2 (Different Celebrities with different company/ product)

Celebrity Endorser	Company / Product
Amitabh Bachchan	* Kalyan Jewelers * Cadbury * Emami * Parker
Shahrukh Khan	* Hyundai Santro * Pepsi * Lux * BYJU's
Alia Bhatt	* Make My Trip * Lays * Titan Raga
Aamir Khan	* Titan Watches * Datsun * Toyota Innova
Aishwarya Rai	* Nakshatra * L'oreal Paris * Lakme

Theories of Celebrity Endorsement

Celebrity endorsements give a brand a touch of glamour and the hope that a famous face will provide added appeal and name recognition in a crowded market (Belch & Belch, 1995). In the battle for the mind, you get the customer excited by showing him a known face, and an effective demand is created. In short it helps increase the recall value of the brand. A research states that the target audience age group of 15-30 gets influenced first by cricketers, then Bollywood stars and only then music, festivals and food (Harish, 2004).

According to Source Credibility Theory, acceptance of the message depends on 'Expertness' and 'Trustworthiness' of the source. Expertness is defined as the perceived ability of the source to make valid assertions. Trustworthiness is defined as the perceived willingness of the source to make valid assertions. Audience acceptance increases with the expertness of the source and the ability of the audience to evaluate the product.

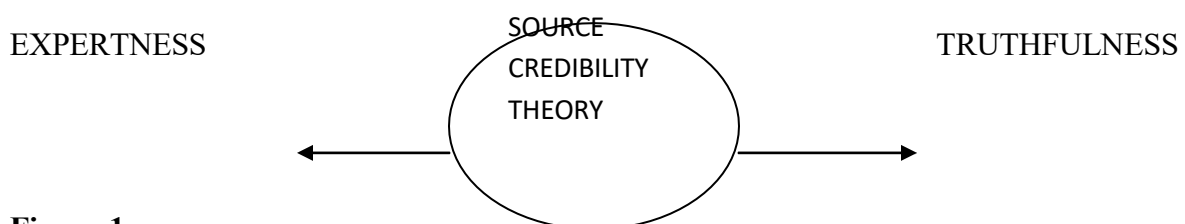


Figure-1

According to Source Attractiveness Theory, which is based on social psychological research, the acceptance of the message depends on familiarity, likeability and similarity. Familiarity is the audience's knowledge of the source through exposure; likeability is the affection for the source's physical appearance and behavior while similarity is the resemblance between source

and receiver. This theory explains the message acceptance in two ways: Identification and Conditioning. Identification is when the receiver or the target audience of the communication begins to identify with the source's attractiveness, and hence tends to accept his opinions, beliefs, habits, attitudes etc. Conditioning is when the attractiveness of the source is supposed to pass on to the brand after regular association of the source with the brand.

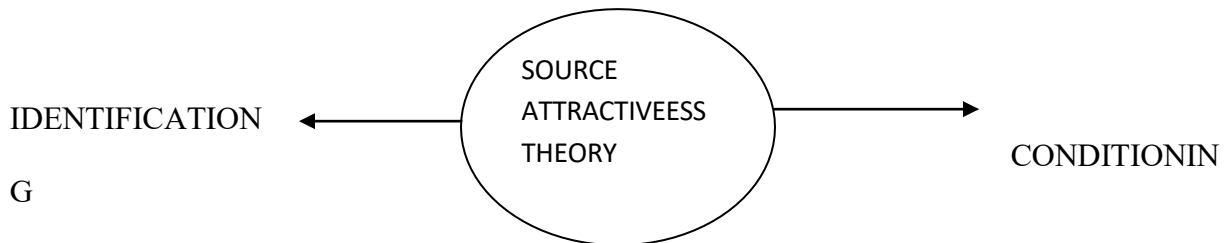


Figure-2

Grant McCracken rejected the previous two theories and proposed the Meaning Transfer Theory. The theory explains that a celebrity encodes a unique set of meanings which if well used can be transferred to the endorsed product. Such a transfer takes place in three stages – encoding meanings, meaning transfer, meaning capture (Figure-3).

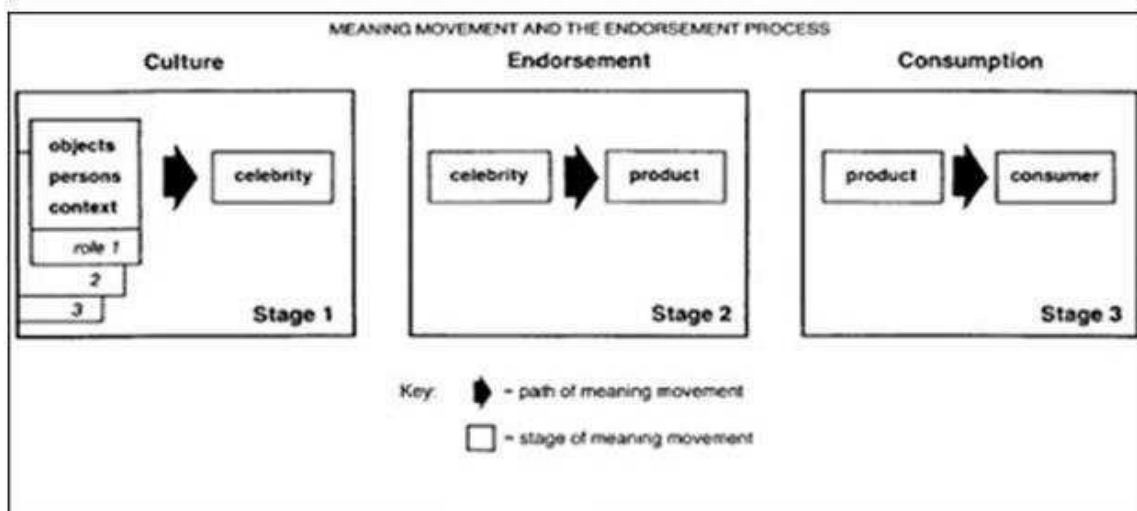


Figure 3 Source: Varaprasd reddy. J & Ramesh. A, .Role of Advertising in Creating Brand Personality

Encoding is nothing but each celebrity has a unique set of meanings, which can be listed by age, gender, race, wealth, personality or lifestyle. In this way, the celebrities encode a set of meanings in their image. For example Karina Kapoor can be seen as a lively, charming, bubbly, witty and enthusiastic.

Meaning Transfer is the stage where it used to transfer those meanings to the product. When skillfully portrayed, celebrities can communicate this image more powerfully than lay endorsers.

Meaning Capture assumes that consumers purchase products not merely for their functional value but also for their cultural and symbolic value. The theory says that consumers buy the

endorsed product with the intention of capturing some of the desirable meanings with which celebrities have passed on to the product. This is more eminent in lifestyle products like clothes, perfumes, cell phones etc.

Results And Discussions

Whether celebrity endorsement really works in consumer market? Theoretically it is yes, because the greatness associated with the endorser is associated with the brand, therefore a brand remains at the top of the consumer's mind. However everyone needs to realize that the impact of an endorser cannot be resist in all product categories and in all the stages of brand life cycles. It really depends upon the type of product and its characteristics (David and Benedikte, 2004). Suppose it is a functional brand, then the product itself is the hero. Here any celebrity association with the brand without corresponding performance of the product will not be sustainable. While in case of 'image brands', like the categories of soaps, soft drinks, cigarettes etc., where it is difficult to distinguish between the products, celebrity endorsements help to distinguish between the brands at an emotional level. According to Synovate, a global market research firm revealed that 47% people would be more likely to buy a brand that was endorsed by their favorite celebrity.

As per the secondary reports, Pepsi Company has used a variety of celebrities including Aishwarya Rai, Hrithik Roshan, Amitabh Bachchan, Kareena Kapoor, Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar etc. Amongst advertisements featuring celebrities, Pepsi tops the heap with the highest recall of 70%, while arch rival Coke is lower across all markets with 52% recall. This proves that Pepsi has really exploited the use of celebrities in their advertisements. Hindustan Lever's 'Lux' soap in India has been using popular film actresses started from Sridevi to Asin to Jahnvi Kapoor, to endorse the soap since its launch four decades ago implying that they owe their stunning looks to the brand. This consistent message hence reinforces the brand values and has been successfully able to position the soap rightly as the 'beauty soap (Marhur et al, 1997).

The direct effect of celebrity endorsement on the sales or profits of the company would be very difficult (Craig & Alan, 2000). Because when Amitabh Bachchan endorsing RIN, an HLL spokesperson says that it was too early to gauge the success of 'Rin' in terms of sales and that though Dabur healthcare products' sales had improved, the increase could not be solely attributed to him. Similarly, there are also cases wherein there was a dramatic change in the sales figure after the endorsements (Hamish, 2004).

Advantages Of Celebrity Endorsement On The Brand

A brand by a star fosters a sense of trust for that brand among the target audience. This is especially true in case of new product. Celebrities ensure attention of the target group through breaking the clutter of advertisements and making the advertisement and the brand more noticeable (Arun Kumar et al, 2006). A celebrity's preference for a brand gives out a persuasive message and hence, because the celebrity is benefiting from the brand, the consumer will also get benefit. There is a demographic and psychographic connection between the celebrities and their fans. There is a demographic connection establishes that different stars appeal differently to various demographic segments i.e. age, gender, class, geography etc., while psychographic connection establishes that stars are loved and adored by their fans. Some stars have a universal appeal and therefore prove to be a good bet to generate interest among the masses (Dean, 1999). Another invaluable benefit from celebrity

endorsements is the public relation opportunities. The effects of three extrinsic advertisement cues viz. third party endorsement, event sponsorship and brand popularity on brand / manufacturer evaluation. It was observed that endorsement significantly affected only product variables (quality and uniqueness) and one image variable (esteem). The third party endorsement hence may be perceived as a signal of product quality (Pralhad Kakkar, 2008).

According to Goldsmith et al, the impact of endorser and corporate credibility is on attitude-toward-the-advertisement, attitude-toward-the-brand, and purchase intentions. As per his research reports, 152 adult consumers were surveyed who viewed a fictitious advertisement for Mobil Oil Company. They rated the credibility of the ad's endorser, the credibility of the company, and attitude-toward-the-ad (Aad), attitude-toward-the-brand (AB), and purchase intentions. It was observed that endorser credibility had its strongest impact on Aad while corporate credibility had its strongest impact on AB. The findings suggest that corporate credibility plays an important role in consumers' reactions to advertisements and brands, independent of the equally important role of endorser credibility (B. Zafer Erdogan et al, 2001).

By observing at the effect of celebrity endorsement on the wealth of a company a classic example of Michael Jordan can be used (Business Line, September 11, 2005). At the time of rumors of Michael Jordan returning to NBA in 1995, he was endorsing products of General Mills (Wheaties), McDonalds (Quarter Pounders, Value Meals), Nike (Air Jordan), Quaker Oats (Gatorade) and Sara Lee (Hans Underwear). Study conducted by Mathur et al. associated with Jordan's endorsements shows that the anticipation of Jordan's return to NBA, and the related increased visibility for him resulted in increase in the market adjusted values of his client firms of almost 2 percent, or more than \$1 billion in stock market value. From this study one can observe that the major celebrity endorser with rumors or otherwise has a tremendous potential to influence the profitability of endorsed products. Semi-partial endorsement indicates that when a company uses famous characters from any TV soaps for brand endorsements, consumers tend to relate to the character that he or she plays in the soap and hence can attract more credibility. For example, Smriti Irani who plays Tulsi in a famous soap has garnered a lot of support from the middle-class housewife today. If she would endorse a brand, there would be more relativity and credibility. Same can be said about Priya Tendulkar who used to play the character of (Rajani Jagdeep Kapoor, 2007).

Disadvantages Of Celebrity Endorsement On The Brand

Very often talked about is the extreme usage of a celebrity called 'lazy advertising', that is inadequate content masked by usage of a celebrity. A good example is the use of Boris Becker by Siyaram and Steve Waugh by ANP Sanmar. Also as said earlier, associating with a star, in itself does not guarantee sales. There is also the fear of Brand-celebrity disconnect which points out that if the celebrity used represents values that conflict with the brand values, the advertising would create conflict in the minds of the target audience. Clutter in brand endorsements is very prominent these days and such kind of over-exposure can be bad for the brand as the recall value drops by a huge margin. A popular drawback of celebrity endorsement is the 'Vampire Effect' or the celebrity overshadowing the brand. Some audiences forget the brand that a celebrity is approving. Others are so spellbound by the personality of the celebrity that they completely fail to notice the brand being advertised. Two new drawbacks can be seen these days what marketers call Celebrity Trap and Celebrity Credibility (Terron, 2004). Celebrity trap is when the celebrity becomes an addiction for the

marketing team and the task to find substitutes becomes more and more difficult, leading to surfeit of celebrities. Celebrity credibility refers to skepticism by the consumers regarding the celebrities, especially when there is anything negative regarding the celebrity associated with the brand in the news, then brand is bound to be affected. For example, Air Jordan's generated revenue sales of \$130 million in the first year. The sales dropped miserably in the second year when Jordan missed 62 games due to a broken foot¹⁸. Another main worry of the advertisers is that their celebrity endorser would get caught in a scandal or an embarrassing situation. Recently, the famous brand Revital which was promoted by the young cricketer Yuvraj Singh which dropped its sales when he effected by cancer (Jayashree & Patel, 2007).

Multiple product endorsement also has a negative impact on customers' purchasing intentions (Carolyn Tripp et al, 1994). For example, superstar Amitabh Bachchan endorses multiple brands like Pepsi, Mirinda, ICICI, BPL, Parker pens, Nerolac, Dabur, Reid & Taylor, Hajmola, Tide, Cadbury and a few social messages, which may not create any social impact rather it will be the bored rum for customers.

In another way, the budget or cost is an important factor for celebrity endorsement. Depending on the status of the celebrity, remuneration could run into millions of rupees for several years or may also include a profit sharing plan. For example when S. Kumar's used Hrithik Roshan for their launch advertising for Tamarind, they reckoned they spent 40 - 50 per cent less on media due to the sheer impact of using Hrithik. Sachin's endorsements got him \$18 million over five years. When Aamir first endorsed Pepsi in 1995, he received Rs 17 lakh for it; his Coke commercials in 1999 got him Rs 2 crore. Hrithik Roshan in his highflying days reportedly made over Rs. 20 crore in endorsements (Business Standard, May 13, 2005). However, a number of brands have been built without celebrity endorsement. For some of their brands, Hindustan Lever and Procter & Gamble do not believe in celebrity endorsement because they think that consumers, especially housewives, are more likely to identify with a lay person on screen than a celebrity. Particularly, the companies like P&G promoting its products through ordinary people (Bush et al, 2004).

Conclusion

Though there is a positive or negative impact on celebrity endorsement on a brand, the complete observation stated that the celebrity may lure the attention of different consumers at different time. In fact the dominance by the celebrities of Bollywood or cricket is rapidly increasing to capture the attention. In this way we can conclude that the celebrity impact is more in different advertisement than that of any other ad techniques.

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