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On the Role of Cultural Brand Building in the Construction of New Rural Culture -- A Case Study of Sansheng Flower Town in Chengdu

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Abstract

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This study investigates the role of cultural brand development in shaping new rural cultural landscapes, with a specific focus on Sansheng Flower Town in Chengdu. Utilizing a qualitative approach, the research examines how the town's cultural brand, centred around flower culture, influences the development of public cultural amenities, activities, and the enhancement of the town's cultural identity. The findings demonstrate that effective cultural branding significantly contributes to rural cultural development by providing a coherent and recognizable brand image that resonates with both local residents and tourists. Furthermore, the study highlights the economic benefits of cultural branding, particularly in terms of tourism and sustainable economic growth. However, it also addresses challenges such as over-commercialization and the need for careful brand management. The insights gained from this case study offer valuable implications for other rural cultural research efforts aimed at achieving a balance between cultural, social, and economic objectives.

Introduction

As rural development progresses in the contemporary era, the establishment of a new rural culture has emerged as a crucial component in the creation of a prosperous society. The concept of new rural cultural development, as outlined in the context of Chinese rural advancement, emphasizes the necessity of addressing cultural transformations alongside economic and social changes (Powe, Connelly, & Nel, 2022). This paradigm aims to fulfil not only the physical needs of rural populations but also their cultural aspirations, by integrating both physical infrastructure and economic growth. Cultural considerations in development encompass not only the expressed cultural desires of rural communities but also efforts to cultivate cultural values and activities as a counterbalance to modernization trends during the rural development process.

The new approach to cultural brand development has emerged as a pivotal strategy for advancing new rural cultural construction, as it provides a structured framework for managing cultural assets. This perspective extends beyond viewing cultural branding merely as a marketing tool; it involves the creation of a distinct cultural identity for communities and their external representation. A cultural brand functions as a medium that facilitates the identification and recognition of cultural values, traditions, and other elements. In the context of new rural cultural development, the construction of cultural brands is a methodical approach that integrates diverse cultural components into broader developmental objectives, while simultaneously promoting cultural advancement in alignment with economic and societal progress (Su & Cheng, 2023).

Using Sansheng Flower Town in Chengdu as a case study, this paper illustrates how cultural brand development can advance new rural cultural construction. Known as the "Hometown of Flowers," Sansheng Flower Town has successfully established a cultural brand centred on flower culture.

This branding strategy not only enhances the town's image as a tourist destination but also reinforces its cultural identity (Min, Linlin, & Yueqin, 2014). The creation of a flower-focused cultural brand has facilitated the development of public cultural amenities, the organization of cultural events, and the preservation of traditional customs. These efforts contribute to the broader goals of new rural cultural construction by fostering cultural activities within the community and promoting social cohesion (Li, Zhou, & Zhang, 2021). However, challenges persist in the realm of new rural cultural construction. One notable issue is the lack of a cohesive cultural strategy, as various cultural development efforts often operate independently and fail to produce optimal cultural enhancement outcomes. Typically, the responsibility for cultural initiatives rests with specific projects or entities, which do not facilitate the integration necessary for creating a comprehensive cultural value chain. This fragmentation undermines the effectiveness of cultural initiatives and their potential impact on rural communities (Li, 2023). These issues can be addressed through a cultural brand-building approach, which provides a unified framework that integrates diverse cultural activities under a single brand.

This paper examines the role of cultural brand development in new rural cultural construction, with a focus on the case of Sansheng Flower Town. It will explore how the town has leveraged its flower-related cultural resources to establish a cultural brand aimed at advancing rural cultural objectives. The study aims to highlight the broader applicability of the cultural brand-building approach for the development of other rural cultures across China.

Literature Review

The Concept of Cultural Brand and Its Evolution

The concept of branding has evolved significantly from its original focus on marketing and consumer goods to encompass broader cultural and social contexts. Initially, brand equity was used exclusively to differentiate products and services for consumers. Over time, the scope of branding expanded beyond products and services to include organizations, geographical regions, and even countries. This broader application of branding has given rise to the notion of cultural branding, which is particularly relevant for the development of rural cultures (Zheng, 2002). A cultural brand can be defined as a brand that embodies specific cultural values, norms, and attitudes. Unlike traditional brands with a commercial focus, cultural brands primarily aim to preserve and promote cultural heritage, foster community unity, and create a sense of belonging (Setiawan et al., 2022; Zhao, 2021).

In the realm of cultural branding, cultural assets are not simply managed but are systematically curated and effectively marketed to establish a clear and recognizable identity. Cultural branding is a multi-faceted process that encompasses several distinct stages, including the development of a brand

image, management of visual and metaphorical symbols, and integration of cultural and historical narratives into the brand's communication strategy. This process aims not only to create a marketable image but also to ensure that the image aligns with and preserves the cultural values represented by the brand. Thus, cultural brand building extends beyond marketing and promotion to include cultural sensitivity and an understanding of cultural heritage.

The Role of Cultural Brands in Rural Cultural Construction

In recent years, cultural brand development has gained prominence in the context of rural culture construction, particularly within the framework of new rural development initiatives in China. These initiatives, which aim to enhance both the rural economy and society, recognize the importance of cultural advancement alongside economic and infrastructural improvements. The objective is to ensure that such progress extends to rural areas, thereby contributing to the broader impacts of modernization beyond merely civil engineering and economic development (Dong, 2021). Cultural brands play a crucial role in rural cultural construction by providing a structured framework for the systematic organization and dissemination of cultural resources. Both culture and cultural branding are pivotal elements of promotional culture; by developing a cultural brand, rural communities can effectively communicate their narratives to external audiences, thereby enhancing their visibility and appeal (Almonawer et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2022). This approach has the potential to foster cultural tourism, support the preservation of cultural heritage, and strengthen local solidarity.

Cultural brand construction, when applied to rural cultural development, provides an effective means of establishing a cohesive cultural identity that the community can embrace. In contrast, the globalization of rural culture has often resulted in disjointed efforts, with various organizations undertaking separate projects without coordination, leading to a fragmented approach to cultural development. Cultural branding, however, offers a unified framework that integrates all cultural activities and initiatives under a single, cohesive identity. This approach enhances the efficiency of these efforts and contributes to the creation of a harmonious and interconnected cultural environment (Xu, 2023; Yulianto, 2022).

Case Study: Sansheng Flower Town in Chengdu

Sansheng Flower Town in Chengdu exemplifies the effective application of cultural brand development to enhance rural cultural growth. Located in the Chengdu Plain, Sansheng Flower Town has harnessed its rich flower culture resources to establish a cultural brand centred on this theme. This dual-purpose approach not only positions the town as a prominent tourist destination but also supports the cultivation and advancement of local cultural traditions. The cultural brand of Sansheng Flower Town is centred on its flower culture, integrating both historical and cultural elements. This orientation is reflected in the visual and symbolic representations of the

brand, including the town's logo, banners, and other promotional materials, all of which feature floral themes (Agung & Sutadji, 2023; Hsun & Jie, 2022). The consistent use of floral imagery enhances the brand's recognizability for both local residents and tourists.

In addition to its visual culture, Sansheng Flower Town's cultural heritage is also reflected in its cultural activities and events. Key festivals such as the Lotus Festival and Plum Blossom Festival, which are flower-themed, play a significant role in the town's cultural landscape (Rural Development Case, 2024). These events not only attract tourists but also engage local residents in cultural activities, thereby promoting and sustaining the town's cultural heritage (Al-Qahtani, 2023; Koenig-Lewis, Palmer, & Asaad, 2021). The integration of these events with the flower-themed cultural brand provides a cohesive and continuous flow that reinforces the town's brand identity. Moreover, through the development of a cultural brand system centred on flower culture, Sansheng Flower Town has made significant advancements in the construction of public cultural facilities. The town has established and promoted aesthetic resources, including museums and cultural centres dedicated to its floral heritage, which offer educational tours for visitors (Wulandari, Rokhmawan, & Dewi, 2023). These facilities not only contribute to the preservation of local culture but also serve as venues for cultural exchange and learning.

Several factors have contributed to the success of the cultural brand in Sansheng Flower Town. Firstly, the brand is intrinsically linked to the town's identity and heritage, making it meaningful and relevant to both local residents and visitors. Secondly, the brand's identity is consistently reinforced through the regular use of graphics, logos, and design elements, ensuring high recognizability. Lastly, the integration of cultural activities and facilities that align with the brand further reinforces the brand's message, maintaining a contextual connection with the town's cultural foundation.

Challenges in Cultural Brand Building and Rural Cultural Construction

The case of Sansheng Flower Town illustrates that cultural brand development can be a potent strategy for advancing rural cultural construction. However, several challenges must be addressed to ensure the successful implementation of such strategies. A significant concern is the potential commercialization of the cultural brand, which risks diminishing its cultural authenticity and reducing it to merely a mechanism for attracting tourists and generating revenue (Al-Taie, Ali, & Jarallah, 2022; Zhang, Yin, & Peng, 2021). This commercialization can undermine the cultural brand's integrity and negatively impact the branding process over time. Challenges also include difficulties in managing and coordinating cultural brand initiatives.

As previously noted, one of the primary benefits of cultural brand development is its ability to unify and strengthen community identity. However, this benefit can only be fully achieved through effective

coordination and oversight of the various cultural activities and efforts related to the brand's advancement (Mushib, 2023; Tirado Ballesteros & Hernández Hernández, 2021). This task can be particularly challenging in rural areas, where funding and professional resources may be limited, and where there are often multiple stakeholders with differing concerns and objectives. Another practical issue involves ensuring the cultural brand remains relevant to local audiences. While the goal of cultural brand development is to enhance the recognition and appreciation of the community, it is essential that the branding aligns with the cultural attributes of the local population. This requires ongoing engagement with the community to assess whether the brand continues to resonate with and reflect their cultural values and identity.

The Role of Visual Image Management in Cultural Brand Building

Closely related to perception, effective management of a cultural brand's visual identity is crucial, as it significantly influences audience perceptions, including those of neighbouring communities. Managing visual imagery involves the strategic use of elements such as logos, signs, and photographs to enhance brand recognition. This is particularly important in rural cultural construction, where the visual representation of the brand can highlight the community's cultural attributes and attract more visitors (Taha & Aissa, 2023; Xue et al., 2020). The case of Sansheng Flower Town demonstrates that effective visual image management can create a robust and consistent brand identity. For example, the town's use of floral imagery on signage, flyers, and other public facilities ensures high recognizability. The coherence of these visual elements not only reinforces the brand's image but also enhances visitors' experiences and interactions with the town's cultural sites. Additionally, the incorporation of thematic elements in cultural brand development can enhance the aesthetic appeal of a community, making it more attractive and welcoming. This is particularly pertinent in cultural tourism, where the symbolic significance of the brand can serve as a valuable asset for attracting visitors and enriching their experience (Liu et al., 2023). By doing so, the cultural brand not only draws tourists to the community but also contributes to its economic development and supports the preservation of its cultural heritage.

The Broader Impact of Cultural Brand Building on Economic Development

In addition to its cultural significance, cultural brand building also yields substantial economic benefits. By enhancing the overall appeal of rural areas as tourist destinations, cultural brands contribute to economic development and create new opportunities for local residents (Baldi et al., 2022). This is particularly important in rural areas where employment opportunities may be limited, as tourism can provide a valuable source of income. In the case of Sansheng Flower Town, the cultural brand centred on flower culture has significantly contributed to attracting tourists and visitors. Events such as the Lotus Festival and Plum Blossom Festival draw considerable attendance from across the region, thereby boosting the town's economy (Chen & Kong, 2021). Beyond the direct revenue

generated from tourism and the scenic appeal of the cultural brand, local residents have also benefited from employment opportunities in cultural and creative industries, such as handcrafting and traditional arts, further promoting economic growth. Similarly, the cultural brand has fostered a new economic perspective for the town, creating opportunities beyond traditional agricultural activities. The economic advancements facilitated by the cultural brand have benefited the community by expanding recreational options and enhancing overall community resilience and sustainability.

Sustainability and Future Directions in Cultural Brand Building

The sustainability of cultural brand building is a crucial aspect, especially in rural cultural development. Cultural branding effectively establishes a lasting cultural identity for the community, offering ongoing benefits over time (Kamari, Paari, & Torvund, 2021). However, this is an ongoing process that necessitates sustained investment in the brand and effective management to maintain its significance and appeal to both local and external stakeholders. In the case of Sansheng Flower Town, it can be concluded that the sustainable development of the cultural brand has been supported by ongoing investments in public cultural infrastructure, cultural events, and the management of its visual identity. These investments have enabled the brand to evolve and adapt over time, continuously benefiting the community (Cross et al., 2023). However, the long-term viability of the brand will depend on the community's ability to evolve and generate innovative solutions in response to new conditions and opportunities.

Looking ahead, several key areas can be further explored and enhanced within the framework of cultural brand building. Notably, the integration of technology presents a significant opportunity for advancing cultural brands. Incorporating elements such as social media, mobile applications, and virtual reality can provide innovative ways to engage with the public and enhance the brand experience. These technological advancements have the potential to offer immersive visitor experiences and boost brand awareness (Alfyananda Kurnia et al., 2022). Another area of focus should be the development of partnerships and collaborations with other communities and organizations, which can amplify the impact of the cultural brand and create opportunities for cultural exchange and cooperative ventures. According to Daldanise (2020), such alliances enable communities to share best practices, pool resources, and forge more robust and resilient cultural brands. Finally, ongoing research and continuous evaluation are essential to assess the actual impact of cultural brand building efforts and identify areas for improvement. This approach ensures that cultural brand building remains dynamic, evolving to address emerging challenges and opportunities, and adapting to achieve better outcomes over time.

Methodology

This paper investigates the role of cultural brand building in the development of new rural culture, using Sansheng Flower Town in Chengdu, China, as a focal point. A qualitative case study methodology is employed, as

this approach is particularly suited for examining complex phenomena within specific contexts (Boblin et al., 2013). By concentrating on a single case, the study facilitates a thorough exploration of the processes and outcomes associated with cultural brand building and its effects on rural cultural development.

Research Design

The research design will utilize a qualitative case study approach to conduct an in-depth examination of the cultural brand management practices implemented by Sansheng Flower Town. This methodology is particularly appropriate for the study as it enables a comprehensive exploration of cultural brand building within its real-life context, taking into account the social, cultural, and economic factors that impact the process.

Case Selection

The case study for this research focuses on Sansheng Flower Town in Chengdu, which has successfully implemented a cultural brand centred on its floral heritage. The town's establishment of a cohesive cultural identity rooted in its flower culture provides a valuable context for examining the role of cultural brand building in rural cultural construction. As a model of new rural cultural development, Sansheng Flower Town serves as a pertinent and illustrative case for this study (Luo, Furuya, & Xie, 2021).

Data Collection

To gain a thorough understanding of the cultural brand building process in Sansheng Flower Town, the study employed various qualitative data sources. These include:

1. Document Analysis: The study gathered information on the branding strategies, cultural activities, and public cultural facilities of Sansheng Flower Town through an examination of official documents, reports, and publications pertaining to its cultural development. This includes local government publications, tourism promotional materials, and academic articles on rural cultural construction (Morgan, 2022).
2. Observational Data: Observations were conducted to assess the events shaping the town's culture, public spaces, and tourist activities, aiming to understand how the brand is perceived by both residents and visitors. These observations specifically focused on how flower culture is integrated into the town's visual and cultural landscape.

Data Analysis

The themes identified and analysed were structured within the data using a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis was chosen for its flexibility and the comprehensive, detailed insights it offers into the data. The analysis was conducted through the following steps:

1. Familiarization with the Data: In the initial step, the researcher

- thoroughly examined all collected documents, visual materials, and observational notes to become intimately acquainted with the content.
2. Coding: Key themes and patterns related to cultural brand building and rural cultural construction were identified and systematically coded. This process involved highlighting significant phrases, concepts, and ideas that emerged from the data.
 3. Theme Development: The data were then organized into broader themes that reflect the key aspects of cultural brand building in Sansheng Flower Town. These themes include the role of visual imagery, the integration of cultural activities, and the impact on public cultural facilities.
 4. Interpretation: Finally, the themes were interpreted in relation to the research questions, focusing on how cultural brand building aligns with the goals of new rural cultural construction.

Validity and Reliability

Several strategies were employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the study's findings:

1. Triangulation: This was achieved through a comprehensive and corroborated understanding of the cultural brand building process, utilizing data triangulation from documents, visual materials, and observations.
2. Thick Description: The research thoroughly delineates the setting, processes, and outcomes of cultural brand construction in Sansheng Flower Town, offering readers insight into the nuances and intricacies of the case.
3. Reflexivity: Throughout the study, the researcher has adopted a reflexive approach, acknowledging personal biases while ensuring that analyses remain rigorously grounded in the data.

Limitations

While this case study provides in-depth insights into the process of cultural brand building in Sansheng Flower Town, its findings are not generalizable to all rural contexts due to the town's unique cultural and historical background. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the data introduces an element of subjectivity that may limit the generalizability of the results. Future research could benefit from incorporating quantitative methods to achieve a more comprehensive analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were meticulously addressed throughout the study. Participants involved in observations provided informed consent, and measures were taken to ensure their privacy and confidentiality were preserved. Adherence to ethical principles of qualitative research ensured the study was conducted with integrity, maintaining respect for both the participants and the community of Sansheng Flower Town.

Results and Discussion

Results

The case study of Sansheng Flower Town yields several significant findings regarding the role of cultural brand building in the development of new rural culture. Key outcomes are observed in the enhancement of public cultural facilities, the organization of cultural activities, and the overall cultural identity of the town.

Enhancement of Public Cultural Facilities

The development of a cultural brand centred on flower culture in Sansheng Flower Town has significantly advanced the town's public cultural services. The branding strategy, focused on floral themes, has led to the creation of various facilities that reinforce and support this image. For example, thematic billboards, flower boards, and cultural centres have been established to promote the town's emphasis on flower production (Wulandari et al., 2023). These facilities not only serve as symbols that enhance the town's cultural identity but also contribute to the town's cultural landscape by offering venues for its promotion. Additionally, flower motifs have been integrated into murals, walls, and pavements throughout the town, enhancing its design, cultural identity, and overall aesthetic appeal.

Promotion of Cultural Activities and Festivals

The establishment of a flower-centric cultural brand in Sansheng Flower Town has facilitated the creation of distinctive cultural events and listings. Festivals such as the Lotus Festival and Plum Blossom Festival, which are integral to the town's flower culture, attract tourists and foster community engagement (Meng & Kang, 2022). These events not only enhance the town's cultural continuity but also demonstrate that cultural branding effectively promotes community involvement and cultural enrichment.

Strengthening of Cultural Identity

The establishment of a cultural brand centred on flower culture has significantly enhanced the cultural presence of Sansheng Flower Town. This distinctive branding approach, leveraging flower culture, has made the town more marketable compared to typical rural areas, thereby fostering the growth of cultural tourism (Wulandari et al., 2023). The pervasive use of floral motifs in various cultural artefacts and public spaces has cultivated a unique cultural identity that is easily recognizable to both residents and visitors. This branding strategy has effectively preserved and enriched the town's cultural heritage while integrating it into its tourism proposition.

Discussion

This case study illustrates that cultural brand building is an effective strategy for advancing new rural cultural construction. Sansheng Flower Town

exemplifies how a well-conceived and systematically implemented cultural brand can promote the development of public cultural facilities, stimulate cultural activities, and enhance cultural awareness—key components of rural cultural development (Zhao, 2021).

Cultural Brand as a Catalyst for Infrastructure Development

A notable concern arising from this study is that cultural branding serves as a catalyst for the development of public cultural facilities. The case of Sansheng Flower Town demonstrates that a strong focus on cultural identity can facilitate the establishment of cultural-branding communities, which in turn enable local populations to secure financial support for cultural infrastructure benefiting both residents and visitors. The town's cultural offerings, such as museums and themed areas, are integral to its flower culture and align with the broader objectives of new rural cultural construction, which emphasizes the enhancement of public cultural facilities to meet the cultural needs of rural communities. Strategic application of cultural branding in infrastructure planning ensures that these facilities are not only functional but also culturally and aesthetically relevant.

Cultural Activities as a Means of Sustaining Cultural Identity

An important implication of promoting cultural activities in Sansheng Flower Town is the need to integrate these activities into the overall brand positioning strategy. The town's flower-themed festivals have proven beneficial not only for preserving and marketing its cultural heritage but also for offering cultural products that facilitate learning and sharing among participants (Zhi, 2003). By consistently aligning cultural activities with the brand image, Sansheng Flower Town has effectively communicated a coherent cultural message that resonates with both residents and tourists. This approach supports findings from previous research, which emphasizes the importance of continuity and thematic cohesion in cultural activities to enhance community identity and cohesion (2015).

Brand Identity as a Tool for Cultural Preservation and Tourism

The robust brand identity established by Sansheng Flower Town has had a dual impact: it has both preserved the town's cultural heritage and positioned it as a prominent cultural destination. This dual effect has not only safeguarded the local flower culture but has also commercialized it, thereby attracting tourism to the region. This case is of notable importance to rural development as it demonstrates that cultural brand building can simultaneously generate economic value and preserve cultural heritage (Du Cros & McKercher, 2020). The approach to cultural tourism employed by Sansheng Flower Town creates a strong cultural brand, thereby fostering a sustainable economic model for rural areas. This model leverages cultural capital to generate income while maintaining cultural integrity.

Challenges and Considerations in Cultural Brand Building

Sansheng Flower Town illustrates the benefits of cultural brand building

but also highlights challenges that need addressing. One concern is the risk of oversaturation and commercialization, which may prioritize tourist attractions over genuine cultural promotion, potentially diminishing the brand's cultural value and causing community cultural isolation. To mitigate this risk, it is essential to anchor cultural branding in genuine support and respect for cultural values. Successful cultural branding also requires effective management and coordination, with careful planning and monitoring of cultural activities, especially in resource-limited rural areas (Bernd & Simonson, 2001).

Implications for Broader Rural Development

This study has important implications for rural development in China and globally. The Sansheng Flower Town case demonstrates that promoting a strong cultural brand can significantly benefit rural areas by enhancing regional visibility, attracting tourism, and fostering local pride. This approach is particularly valuable for culturally rich regions facing the challenges of globalization. The findings illustrate how integrating cultural branding into rural development can align cultural growth with economic and social progress, thereby fostering a harmonious and culturally vibrant rural society (Zheng, 2002). The case study of Sansheng Flower Town illustrates the potential of cultural brand building in shaping rural culture. By establishing a cultural brand centred on flower culture, the town has expanded its cultural initiatives, enhanced public cultural facilities, promoted diverse cultural activities, and strengthened its cultural positioning. These achievements underscore the advantages of cultural branding as a development strategy for rural areas. The findings offer valuable insights for other rural regions seeking to preserve their cultural identity while fostering economic development and social inclusion.

Conclusion

This research paper examines Sansheng Flower Town in Chengdu, China, to explore the impact of cultural brand building on rural culture. The study finds that deliberate cultural branding can positively influence the culture, society, and economy of rural areas. Sansheng Flower Town's successful integration of flower culture into its branding has enhanced public cultural facilities and provided spaces for social and cultural engagement. This approach supports new rural cultural construction and improves the town's appeal as a cultural landmark. The promotion and support of cultural activities, driven by the town's established brand, underscore the importance of cultural branding in fostering and disseminating regional culture. Festivals such as the Lotus Festival and the Plum Blossom Festival not only attract tourists but also instil a sense of pride in local cultural values. By consistently emphasizing flower culture, the town has maintained a coherent cultural theme that resonates with both residents and visitors, demonstrating how cultural branding can enhance engagement and stimulate cultural tourism. Sansheng Flower Town's successful cultural branding exemplifies a model that integrates cultural resource development with sustainable economic growth while preserving heritage. This approach

underscores the value of cultural branding in balancing preservation with economic advancement, demonstrating that branding can drive economic growth while honouring cultural traditions.

However, the study also acknowledges certain limitations, such as the risk of commercialization threatening the brand's cultural integrity. It highlights the need for effective management strategies to preserve cultural value amidst commercial pressures. These challenges are crucial to address within the context of cultural branding to ensure a positive impact on rural development. In conclusion, Sansheng Flower Town demonstrates that cultural branding effectively integrates cultural, economic, and social development in rural areas. The study's findings offer valuable insights for other rural regions seeking to enhance their cultural capital and achieve sustainable development.

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