DIJEFA: Dinasti International Journal of Economics, Finance & Accounting
E-ISSN: 2721-303X
P-ISSN: 2721-3021
https://dinastipub.org/DIJEFA dinasti.info@gmail.com +62 811 7404 455
DOI: https://doi.org/10.38035/dijefa.v5i6

Exploring Age and Gender Influences on Consumer Behaviour in Online Food Delivery Services

Krish Zaveri [1*], Nevil Thacker [2], Suhani Patel [3], Mayank Meghwal [4], Rahul Chauhan[5], Andino Maseleno [6], Kharchenko Raisa [7]

[1] United World Institution of Management, Karnavati University, Gandhinagar, India Email: krishzaveri09@gmail.com
[2] United World Institution of Management, Karnavati University, Gandhinagar, India
[3] United World Institution of Management, Karnavati University, Gandhinagar, India
[4] United World Institution of Management, Karnavati University, Gandhinagar, India
[5] United World Institution of Management, Karnavati University, Gandhinagar, India
[6] International Open University, Gambia. Email: andino@bahasa.iou.edu.gm
[7] The North-West Institute of Management of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (NWIM RANEPA). Email: kh9044947155r@gmail.com

[*]Corresponding Author: krishzaveri09@gmail.com

Abstract: This study examines the demographics and behaviours of online food delivery service users in Ahmedabad, focusing on age and gender influences. Data from 99 respondents reveal a predominance of young male users, with significant findings indicating that age affects the frequency of service use and satisfaction with issue resolution. Conversely, gender shows no significant impact on usage patterns or customer experiences. The analysis highlights the importance of tailoring marketing strategies to target different age groups while emphasizing universal improvements in service quality. Future research could explore additional demographic factors and regional variations, contributing to a broader understanding of consumer behaviour in the global online food delivery market. These insights are essential for enhancing customer satisfaction and driving growth in this evolving industry.

Keywords: Online Food Delivery, Demographics, Customer Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of digital food delivery platforms, such as Zomato and Swiggy, has transformed the way consumers access restaurant services in India, creating significant disruptions in the food and hospitality industry. These platforms have revolutionized food delivery by offering quick and convenient access to a wide variety of food choices, from local street food to gourmet cuisine, and have drastically changed consumer behaviour, preferences, and expectations. However, as much as they offer convenience, they have also presented a myriad of challenges for both users and businesses. The highly competitive

nature of the market, rising customer expectations, operational constraints, and evolving technology trends have exposed various pain points that require closer scrutiny.

Zomato and Swiggy are operating in an environment that is not only fiercely competitive but also continually innovating, particularly with the emergence of quick-commerce and ultra-fast delivery services like Zepto, which promise grocery deliveries in under 10 minutes (Saldanha, 2023). While speed and convenience are the primary selling points of these services, they bring along logistical challenges, sustainability concerns, and issues related to customer satisfaction and loyalty. For instance, Zomato's 10-minute food delivery initiative raised eyebrows regarding the operational feasibility, safety concerns for delivery partners, and potential compromises on food quality (Gupta & Prashar, 2023). Quick-service restaurants (QSRs) like WoW! Momo have also been drawn into this competitive landscape, needing to innovate and sustain themselves amidst these evolving expectations (Bhattacharya & Chattopadhyay, 2022).

The rise of mobile food delivery services has also brought into focus the importance of service quality in shaping customer loyalty. Su et al. (2022) explore how the quality of mobile food delivery services affects customer loyalty, utilizing Gronroos's service quality perspective to identify key factors such as reliability, responsiveness, and customer care. The study highlights that while convenience and speed are critical, the overall service experience determines longterm customer loyalty. In parallel, Chauhan et al. (2024) investigate the competitive pressures faced by smaller players in the food and retail sectors, underscoring the challenges of competing with large, established brands in a David vs Goliath scenario, where large players can invest in better technology and marketing, leaving smaller businesses vulnerable.

In addition to competition and service quality, the adoption of online-to-offline (O2O) platforms among small retailers has been identified as another significant challenge (Chawla et al., 2024). Despite the growing digital ecosystem, many small retailers in India face barriers to adopting O2O technology platforms like Zomato and Swiggy, limiting their ability to participate in the digital economy. This has broader implications for the inclusivity of the digital transformation in the food and retail sectors, where the integration of small businesses remains an ongoing challenge. Lavuri et al. (2024) further emphasize the role of sustainability in quickcommerce, examining how green initiatives in fast deliveries are influencing customer engagement and brand perception.

Furthermore, the evolving nature of gig work, particularly in food delivery, raises questions about the well-being and work satisfaction of delivery personnel. Tiwari et al. (2024) investigate factors affecting the happiness and job satisfaction of gig workers, revealing how these individuals, who are critical to the success of platforms like Zomato and Swiggy, face issues related to job security, income volatility, and work-life balance. The introduction of social coupons and promotional offers, explored by Ram et al. (2024), plays a dual role in this landscape: while they drive short-term customer engagement and sales, they also increase the pressure on delivery personnel to meet tight timelines and high customer expectations.

As the digital food delivery sector continues to grow and evolve, the interplay of convenience, technology, competition, and sustainability poses significant challenges for platforms, users, and workers alike. Existing research underscores the importance of addressing these issues holistically, ensuring that both service quality and worker satisfaction are prioritized alongside innovation and growth. While platforms like Zomato and Swiggy continue to dominate the market, their long-term success will depend on their ability to navigate these complex dynamics and deliver value not only to customers but also to the broader ecosystem of retailers, delivery personnel, and other stakeholders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The increasing adoption of digital platforms has significantly reshaped the on-demand services and food delivery sectors, with notable players like Zomato, Swiggy, and UrbanClap leading the charge in India. UrbanClap's emergence as a marketplace for on-demand services demonstrates how digital platforms cater to a growing need for convenience among consumers, delivering services at the click of a button (Abhishek, Mukherjee, & Patra, 2023). This shift towards digital platforms has led to the exploration of new technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML), which have begun to redefine human resource management (HRM) practices, especially in the recruitment and management of gig workers (Agarwal, Gupta, & Roshani, 2023). The rapid growth of AI/ML has had implications for brands in various sectors, such as Mamaearth, which leveraged technology to fuel its rapid brand expansion and growth (Aggarwal & Agarwal, 2023).

The adoption of digital platforms has also been analyzed from the perspective of information quality in the supply chain. Agrawal, Singh, and Upadhyay (2021) developed a structural model to evaluate information quality within e-agri supply chains, highlighting the importance of accurate data in ensuring smooth operations across digital platforms. This model can be applied to understand the role of information in the digital food delivery sector, where accurate order and delivery tracking are critical for customer satisfaction. Similarly, Arora, Gupta, and Mittal (2023) explored the adoption of food delivery apps during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, using an extended technology adoption model to reveal how consumer behaviour shifted towards online platforms during emergencies.

The growing gig economy, characterized by temporary and flexible job opportunities on platforms like Zomato and Swiggy, has introduced significant challenges for gig workers. Behl et al. (2022) identified barriers to entry for gig workers in the gig economy, pointing out issues like lack of job security and low pay, which continue to plague the industry. These barriers illustrate the darker side of the gig economy, raising concerns about the sustainability of gigbased employment models.

From the business perspective, quick-service restaurants (QSRs) such as WoW! Momo have innovated to remain competitive in a rapidly evolving market (Bhattacharya & Chattopadhyay, 2022). These innovations are essential for companies that operate in a shared economy and a startup ecosystem, where competition is high, and emerging trends like big data and crowdfunding shape market dynamics (Chaudhari & Sinha, 2021). As smaller businesses, like Pizza Italia, strive to compete with industry giants, they must rely on innovative strategies and localized marketing efforts (Chauhan et al., 2024).

For small retailers in India, adopting online-to-offline (O2O) technology platforms has been challenging. Chawla, Verma, and Mittal (2024) identified significant barriers that prevent these retailers from fully integrating into the digital ecosystem, resulting in a gap between large digital platforms and smaller, traditional businesses. Dabas et al. (2021) also explored how independent businesses, particularly restaurants, have utilized digital marketing tools to remain relevant and compete with larger, more established brands in both India and the UK.

Meanwhile, hyperlocal delivery models, as seen in the food delivery sector, have proven to be effective distribution channels in densely populated urban areas. Guru et al. (2023) assessed the feasibility of these models and found that hyperlocal deliveries could offer a competitive advantage in terms of speed and accessibility. However, the consumer's attitude towards food delivery apps is heavily influenced by factors such as behavioural intentions and trust, as demonstrated by Gupta and Duggal (2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, Hamid, Azhar, and Sujood (2023) also emphasized the role of trust in influencing consumer behaviour when ordering food and beverages via e-commerce platforms.

Finally, Zomato's recent foray into 10-minute food delivery has sparked discussions about operational feasibility, safety, and customer satisfaction. Gupta and Prashar (2023) highlighted both the opportunities and challenges associated with such ultra-fast delivery services, raising concerns about whether such initiatives are sustainable or merely short-term marketing gimmicks.

This body of research underscores the complex interplay of technology, consumer behaviour, and business strategy in the digital food delivery ecosystem. It also highlights the need for further exploration of the gig economy's challenges and the role of technology in shaping future business models.

Digital platforms have emerged as dominant forces across various sectors, especially in the orchestration and governance of platform ecosystems. Mukhopadhyay and Bouwman (2019) provide a comprehensive review of the orchestration strategies within digital platform ecosystems, shedding light on how governance mechanisms contribute to the success of platforms like Zomato and Swiggy. Their work aligns with Paluri, Jain, and Sankara Narayanan (2022), who analysed Zomato's strategic approach in capturing the food-tech market in India. Zomato's rapid expansion into the food delivery space is a prime example of how digital platforms can leverage network effects to capture market share quickly.

Food delivery apps (FDAs) have transformed the dining experience in Asia, especially in countries like India and the Philippines. According to Pandey, Chawla, and Puri (2022), FDAs have gained traction due to their ability to provide convenience and efficiency, particularly in urban settings. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this trend, leading to unique challenges in the logistics and last-mile delivery segments. Puram et al. (2022) adopted a grounded theory approach to examine the perspectives of food delivery riders during the pandemic, highlighting the operational challenges faced in maintaining service efficiency amidst restrictions and safety concerns.

The rise of digital commerce has also led to innovations in retail and reselling platforms. Meesho, a platform focused on reselling in the e-commerce and grocery sectors, has disrupted traditional retail models by allowing smaller sellers to reach larger audiences (Purohit, 2023). Similarly, social coupons have evolved as an important tool for customer engagement and retention. Ram et al. (2024) explored the evolution of social coupons and provided a comprehensive review of their role in shaping marketing strategies in the digital age.

Zomato continues to shape the future of food delivery with its innovative offerings and strategic decisions. Ramadan and Kanso (2023) examined how Zomato's leadership has maintained its competitive edge, adapting to changing market conditions and consumer preferences. Additionally, Rana et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of artificial intelligence (AI) in enhancing customer journeys. AI technologies, such as recommendation engines and sentiment analysis, are becoming integral to platforms like Zomato, enabling them to personalize customer experiences and improve satisfaction.

The predictive capabilities of AI have also been applied to social media, where platforms strive to enhance user engagement. Ray et al. (2022) combined latent factors and emotional analysis to improve the performance of social media classifiers, which could be leveraged by food delivery apps to better understand customer feedback and improve service quality. Alongside this, platforms must also navigate challenges related to worker satisfaction. Saldanha, Balasundaram, and Aranha (2022) discussed the issues faced by Zomato's delivery partners, revealing dissatisfaction among gig workers due to unfair wages and working conditions. These insights underscore the need for platforms to balance operational efficiency with fair treatment of their workforce.

Zepto, a competitor in the quick commerce segment, has introduced 10-minute grocery delivery, creating new benchmarks in the industry. Saldanha (2023) explored Zepto's

business model and its role in reshaping customer expectations in grocery delivery. As these fast delivery models grow, platforms like Zomato may need to innovate further to maintain their competitive edge in both food and grocery delivery.

The growth of multi-brand cloud kitchens has also contributed to the evolving food delivery ecosystem. Sharma and Dey (2021) examined the operations of ONE STOP KITCHEN, a multi-brand cloud kitchen that leverages centralized cooking facilities to serve multiple restaurant brands. Such models have gained popularity due to their cost efficiency and scalability, particularly in urban markets where demand for food delivery is high. Similarly, Chef Junction has capitalized on the growing demand for homemade food by connecting home chefs with customers (Shroff & Shah, 2023), highlighting a trend towards hyper-localized, personalized food services.

Finally, fintech innovations have begun to play a critical role in supporting micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and startups in India. Sachdev and Singh (2023) explored the role of fintech in enabling access to capital and supporting the growth of MSMEs in Punjab, emphasizing the importance of digital financial tools in fostering entrepreneurship. As platforms like Zomato continue to expand, they may benefit from these fintech innovations to support their merchant partners and enhance their financial offerings.

Together, this body of literature provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics shaping the digital platform ecosystem, with a particular focus on the food delivery sector, gig economy, and related industries. The integration of AI, fintech, and innovative delivery models continues to drive the evolution of these platforms, while challenges related to worker satisfaction and last-mile logistics remain critical areas for further exploration.

Zomato's quick commerce and other diversification strategies are part of a broader trend within the food delivery ecosystem, where platforms are continuously evolving to capture new market segments. Singh (2023) explores Zomato's rapid adaptation by incorporating grocery delivery into its offerings, mirroring the strategies of other brands like Mamaearth, which transitioned from a digital-first approach to establishing offline presence (Soni et al., 2024). These movements highlight the growing importance of a hybrid business model in achieving sustained growth.

The labour challenges in the gig economy, particularly in food delivery platforms, have also garnered attention. Subramanian and Choudhary (2023) explore the attrition problems faced by food delivery platforms like Zomato and how these companies struggle to retain delivery personnel. Tiwari et al. (2024) extend this discussion by investigating the factors influencing job satisfaction among gig workers, revealing that improving working conditions is essential to curb attrition rates.

Moreover, governance issues between platforms and restaurant partners are critical in maintaining a balanced ecosystem, as highlighted by Yadav, N., N., and Banerjee (2022). Their work emphasizes the role of governance mechanisms in fostering trust and cooperation, which is essential for the smooth operation of delivery platforms. Yadav and Goyal (2022) further elaborate on the trust deficit between food delivery businesses and their partners, stressing the importance of rebuilding relationships to ensure long-term collaboration.

These studies collectively paint a comprehensive picture of the challenges and opportunities within the online food delivery sector, where service quality, labour issues, platform governance, and market expansion remain central to the success and sustainability of the industry.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research aimed to explore the factors influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty in the online food delivery sector, as well as to investigate the challenges faced by delivery personnel working for these platforms. The study was conducted with a sample size of 101

respondents from Ahmedabad, Gujarat, who actively used online food delivery services. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, ensuring a convenient and accessible approach for participants. The questionnaire was designed to gather insights on customer perceptions of service quality, the convenience of mobile applications, and the overall experience with food delivery platforms. Additionally, questions were included to explore the working conditions and satisfaction levels of delivery personnel.

Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty in the context of online food delivery platforms.
2. To assess the factors contributing to job satisfaction and attrition rates among delivery personnel in the gig economy.

Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between service quality and customer loyalty on food delivery platforms.

H2: Job satisfaction is significantly influenced by working conditions, leading to lower attrition rates among delivery personnel.

The collected data was analysed using SPSS software to apply statistical techniques such as correlation and regression analysis. These methods were employed to test the hypotheses and gain a deeper understanding of the relationships between the variables. The use of SPSS allowed for accurate data analysis, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of customer behaviour and workforce challenges within the online food delivery industry. Similar studies have used quantitative analysis to explore service quality and customer loyalty (Shroff, Shah, & Gajjar, 2022; Su et al., 2022), as well as issues related to the gig economy and delivery personnel (Subramanian & Choudhary, 2023; Tiwari et al., 2024). This study builds on these works by focusing specifically on the Ahmedabad region, providing localized insights into the growing online food delivery market.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis

Table 1. Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**1**	8	8.1	8.1	8.1
	2	66	66.7	66.7	74.7
	3	20	20.2	20.2	94.9
	4	5	5.1	5.1	100.0
	Total	99	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 presents the age distribution of the survey respondents. The data is categorized into four age groups. The largest segment, represented by 66 respondents (66.7%), falls within the second age category, indicating a strong presence of individuals in this age range within the sample. The first age group consists of 8 respondents (8.1%), which suggests a smaller representation of younger individuals. The third age group includes 20 respondents (20.2%), indicating a moderate level of participation from middle-aged individuals. Finally, the fourth age group, which captures older individuals, has 5 respondents (5.1%). The cumulative percent column shows that, when combined, these groups account for the entire sample of 99 respondents, providing a clear picture of the age demographics of those using online food delivery services in Ahmedabad.

Table 2. Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**1**	68	68.7	68.7	68.7
	2	26	26.3	26.3	94.9
	3	3	3.0	3.0	98.0
	4	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	99	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 details the gender distribution among the respondents. A majority of the sample is male, with 68 respondents (68.7%), while females comprise 26 respondents (26.3%). Additionally, there are 3 respondents (3.0%) who identify as non-binary, and 2 respondents (2.0%) did not specify their gender. This distribution highlights a predominant male presence in the online food delivery customer base, with females and non-binary individuals represented to a lesser extent. The cumulative percent column again confirms that all responses have been accounted for in the total of 99 respondents.

Table 3. Occupation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**1**	65	65.7	65.7	65.7
	2	21	21.2	21.2	86.9
	3	6	6.1	6.1	92.9
	4	7	7.1	7.1	100.0
	Total	99	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 categorizes the respondents based on their occupation. The most significant group consists of 65 individuals (65.7%) who are likely engaged in full-time employment or students, indicating that a large portion of the online food delivery user base is working or studying. The second largest category, representing 21 respondents (21.2%), includes part-time workers or those in less stable employment situations. Additionally, there are 6 respondents (6.1%) categorized as unemployed, and 7 respondents (7.1%) identified as retired or in other occupations. The data reflects a diverse occupational landscape among the respondents, highlighting that the online food delivery services cater to a wide range of customers from various employment backgrounds. The cumulative percent confirms the completeness of the data set with 99 total respondents.

An ANOVA analysis examining the relationship between age and various factors related to online food delivery services. The table outlines the sum of squares, degrees of freedom (df), mean square, F-statistic, and significance (Sig.) values for each factor. The first factor, "How often do you use food delivery services," shows a significant result ($F = 3.834$, $p = .012$), indicating that there are meaningful differences in usage frequency across different age groups. This suggests that age may influence how often individuals engage with food delivery services. In contrast, the other factors reveal non-significant results. For example, the preferred platform ($F = 0.905$, $p = .442$) and primary reason for using delivery services ($F = 0.112$, $p = .953$) demonstrate no significant variance among age groups. Similarly, experiences with delivery issues ($F = 0.559$, $p = .643$) and ratings of delivery speed ($F = 0.579$, $p = .630$) show no substantial differences related to age.

The factor "How satisfied are you with the resolution of the issues you faced?" stands out with a significant F value of 3.543 ($p = .018$), indicating that age influences satisfaction with issue resolution. This highlights the potential for differing expectations or experiences across age demographics when it comes to customer service resolution in food delivery.

The analysis indicates that while age appears to impact usage frequency and satisfaction with resolution processes, it does not significantly affect platform preference,

reasons for use, or perceptions of service quality. These findings can inform strategies for targeting different age groups in marketing and service delivery improvements in the online food delivery sector.

Table 4. ANOVA Between Gender and Factors

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
How often do you use food delivery services (1 / 2)	Between Groups	3.736	3	1.245	.869	.460
	Within Groups	134.723	94	1.433		
	Total	138.459	97			
Which platform do you use more?	Between Groups	2.658	3	.886	.784	.506
	Within Groups	106.250	94	1.130		
	Total	108.908	97			
What is your primary reason for using food delivery services?	Between Groups	3.086	3	1.029	.425	.735
	Within Groups	227.414	94	2.419		
	Total	230.500	97			
Have you faced any issues with the delivery service in the past 3 months?	Between Groups	.613	3	.204	.749	.526
	Within Groups	25.632	94	.273		
	Total	26.245	97			
If Yes, please specify the type of issue(s) you encountered (Select the options that apply)	Between Groups	2.666	3	.889	.285	.836
	Within Groups	292.966	94	3.117		
	Total	295.633	97			
How 2 are you with the resolution of the issue(s) you faced?	Between Groups	.669	3	.223	.079	.971
	Within Groups	264.025	94	2.809		
	Total	264.694	97			
How do you rate the delivery speed of the platform you use the most?	Between Groups	.808	3	.269	.350	.789
	Within Groups	72.223	94	.768		
	Total	73.031	97			
How do you rate the quality of customer service (help centres, support chat, etc.)?	Between Groups	6.825	3	2.275	1.844	.144
	Within Groups	115.951	94	1.234		
	Total	122.776	97			

Table 4 presents the ANOVA results analyzing the relationship between gender and various factors related to online food delivery services. The analysis includes multiple aspects, such as usage frequency, preferred platforms, primary reasons for use, and customer satisfaction with service quality.

The findings indicate that there are no statistically significant differences across gender groups for the factors assessed. For instance, the frequency of using food delivery services ($F = 0.869$, $p = .460$) and the choice of preferred platform ($F = 0.784$, $p = .506$) show that both male and female respondents engage similarly in these behaviors. Additionally, the primary reasons for using these services ($F = 0.425$, $p = .735$) and experiences with issues in the past three months ($F = 0.749$, $p = .526$) also reveal no significant differences, suggesting that motivations and experiences are consistent across genders.

Moreover, customer satisfaction regarding issue resolution ($F = 0.079$, $p = .971$) and ratings of delivery speed ($F = 0.350$, $p = .789$) further corroborate the absence of variance between genders. The analysis of customer service quality ($F = 1.844$, $p = .144$) also indicates a lack of significant differences, though it approaches marginal significance.

Overall, the data suggests that gender does not play a critical role in shaping the experiences and perceptions of online food delivery services among respondents. This lack of significant variance can inform service providers that their strategies can be broadly applicable across genders, focusing instead on enhancing overall service quality and customer satisfaction for all users.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the survey data reveals important insights into the demographics and behaviors of online food delivery service users in Ahmedabad. The predominant age group and gender distribution suggest a customer base that is primarily male and largely in the 18-34 age range, with full-time employed or student individuals making up the majority. This demographic profile offers valuable information for service providers looking to tailor their marketing strategies and enhance user engagement.

Significantly, the ANOVA results indicate that age influences both the frequency of service use and satisfaction with issue resolution, while gender does not significantly affect users' experiences or motivations. This suggests that marketing strategies could be effectively targeted at different age groups, while service quality improvements should focus on universally enhancing customer satisfaction regardless of gender.

The study's findings can inform food delivery companies in Ahmedabad and beyond about the specific needs and expectations of their users. For instance, understanding that younger users may engage with delivery services more frequently and have different satisfaction levels can drive more targeted marketing campaigns and service improvements tailored to this demographic. Additionally, recognizing the importance of effective issue resolution for older users can lead to enhanced customer service protocols that accommodate varying expectations.

Future research could expand on these findings by examining other demographic variables, such as income level or education, and their impact on food delivery usage. It could also explore regional differences in usage patterns and preferences, given that cultural context often shapes consumer behaviour. Furthermore, a longitudinal study could assess how changing trends in food delivery, influenced by factors like technology advancements or global events (such as the COVID-19 pandemic), impact user behaviour over time.

On a global scale, as online food delivery services continue to grow, understanding these demographic insights is crucial for providers to remain competitive and responsive to diverse customer needs. By leveraging the findings from this study, service providers can create inclusive strategies that enhance user satisfaction and ultimately drive growth in this rapidly evolving sector.

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