From Taste Buds to Loyalty: How Food and Service Quality Influence Customer Satisfaction and Repeat Intentions in Hotel Restaurants

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Abstract: Customer satisfaction with food and service quality in hotel restaurants is a crucial driver of repeat intentions, directly influencing guest loyalty and long-term business success in the hospitality industry. This study examines the factors that affect customer satisfaction with hotel restaurant offerings and the subsequent impact on customers' intentions to return. The researchers gathered the data for this study using a quantitative research design and customer questionnaires. A 95% response rate was collected and analyzed using SPSS software. Next, the researchers quantitatively analyzed the survey responses using statistical methods to measure customer satisfaction levels and identify key variables influencing repeat intentions. The results of this study have practical implications for hoteliers and restaurant managers looking to improve customer satisfaction and encourage repeat business. Emphasizing continuous staff training, maintaining high food safety standards, and creating a welcoming ambiance are key strategies to enhance customer experiences. Ultimately, understanding the dynamics of customer satisfaction and its direct link to repeat intention can assist hotel restaurants in building enduring guest relationships and establishing a competitive edge in the hospitality market.

Keywords: *Customer Satisfaction, Food Quality, Service Quality, Repeat Intention, Hotel Restaurants*

1. Introduction and Background

Quality is a perception or overall evaluation of a service's superiority (Dam & Dam, 2021). To be internationally competitive, service sectors must provide service quality that exceeds what their clients expect. The quality of service determines whether an organization succeeds or fails. Businesses and organizations use customer satisfaction measures in almost every field because satisfied customers are essential for a profitable business operation (Ali et al., 2021). The quality of service provided can impact a customer's level of satisfaction. However, the ever-changing nature of the business environment complicates the factors influencing service quality (Murphy et al., 2021). As a result, these measurement dimensions are specific to the industry in question. Consumers, who have used their experiences and emotions to form opinions, determine service standards. Customers' expectations influence service quality, process quality, and product quality (Ali et al., 2021).

Commitment from workers and cooperation from all management tiers are required to build a successful business focused on providing outstanding service. As a result, it is essential for managers who consistently deliver products or services to keep detailed records of their customers in terms of how effectively they satisfy the requirements set forth by their clientele (Mehmood, 2021). Service providers are constantly seeking new methods to enhance their operations and provide clients with services of an increasingly higher standard (Rane et al., 2023). The study also stated that providing satisfaction to consumers should be an ultimate objective for every business, given that customers are a company's most valuable resource in terms of its immediate and long-term viability. Quality significantly influences and determines the level of client satisfaction (Tannady & Purnamaningsih, 2023). Canteens, cafeterias, and hotels are some of the many establishments that fall under the "category of food service providers." Businesses that rely on customer service, such as hotels and restaurants, exert significant effort to evaluate and enhance the quality of the customer experience they provide. One thing that unites them all is their priority on putting the consumer's needs first.

This study applies to the Malaysian context to ascertain the role that food and service play in determining the level of customer satisfaction experienced in hotel restaurants. There are a variety of internal and external

factors that have the potential to affect the degree of satisfaction experienced by customers (Yunus & Ishak, 2012). We can refer to the contentment of an organization's interior and exterior customers as customer satisfaction (Khadka & Maharjan, 2017). Existing literature has frequently focused on these aspects in isolation or within broader contexts, leaving a gap in the comprehensive examination of how they interact in the hotel restaurant setting. This study aims to close this gap by investigating the key drivers of customer satisfaction in hotel restaurants and how these factors interact to influence guests' repeat intentions, resulting in increased guest loyalty and long-term business success. In addition, the literature study has led to the identification of researchers focusing on external customer satisfaction. However, there is also discontent with the level of service provided to internal customers from the company's perspective. This is a problem that has caused concern among certain organizations, particularly those who are concerned about their personnel's well-being.

There is a widespread misconception among food service suppliers that customers only visit eating establishments for food. It is commonly believed that customers visit restaurants because of the food they order (Hakim et al., 2021). Customers are considered content as long as they can purchase the food that meets their requirements. However, patrons of full-service restaurants, whose primary objective is to conduct business or enjoy the company of their dear ones (friends, family, spouse, etc.), may need to reconsider this perception. The restaurant business has conducted very few investigations, despite several recent studies on customer satisfaction and service quality (Ahmed et al., 2023). The level of internal customer satisfaction in Malaysian hotels and restaurants compared to their workers has remained constant. This research attempts to clarify the attributes of food and service quality in hotel restaurants that influence internal customer satisfaction by explicitly examining how food and service quality responsiveness of staff, as well as food and service quality and hotel restaurant ambiance, affect internal customer satisfaction. This research specifically examines how the responsiveness of staff, along with the quality of food and service, and the ambiance of hotel restaurants, influence internal customer satisfaction.

Research Objectives:
The primary objectives of this research are as follows:

RO1: To examine the relationships between food quality and customer satisfaction.
RO2: To determine the relationships between service quality and customer satisfaction.
RO3: To examine the relationship between customer satisfaction and repeat intention in hotel restaurants.

By addressing these research objectives, the study hopes to provide substantial insights into customer satisfaction with hotel restaurant cuisine and service quality, which may influence customers' intentions to return to certain restaurants. The data will help us gain a better understanding of consumer behavior in the sharing economy, as well as ideas for improving customer satisfaction and repeat intentions in hotel restaurants. The insights will also help to improve our understanding of customer behavior in the sharing economy.

2. Literature Review

Food Quality and Customer Satisfaction: Food quality is a primary determinant of customer satisfaction in hotel restaurants. Chaturvedi et al. (2024) found that guests were more likely to be satisfied and inclined to revisit establishments that offered fresh, flavorful, and well-prepared dishes. Han and Hyun (2017) also emphasized the importance of culinary creativity and menu innovation in enhancing customer satisfaction with food offerings.

Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction: The literature well documents the significance of service quality in shaping customer satisfaction. Hotel guests place a high value on personalized and attentive service, widely acknowledging its impact on overall satisfaction (Tai et al. 2021). A study by Ali et al. (2021) highlighted the critical role of staff competence and friendliness in influencing guest perceptions of service quality and repeat intention.

Factor that May Affect Repeat Intentions toward Customer Satisfaction at Hotel Restaurants: Repeat intention refers to the likelihood of customers returning to an establishment, which is a critical indicator of

customer satisfaction and loyalty in the hotel restaurant industry. Understanding the factors influencing repeat intention can help hoteliers and restaurant managers devise effective strategies to enhance customer satisfaction and encourage guests to return. This review explores vital factors that may affect repeat intention toward customer satisfaction at hotel restaurants.

Food Quality and Culinary Offerings: Food quality plays a central role in influencing customers' likelihood of returning to a hotel restaurant. Serving fresh, delicious, and well-prepared dishes increases the likelihood of positive repeat experiences for guests (Zarezadeh et al., 2022). Varied and innovative menu options, catering to diverse tastes and dietary preferences, contribute to enhanced customer satisfaction and higher chances of returning patrons.

Service Excellence and Personalized Interactions: The quality of service provided by hotel restaurant staff has a significant impact on repeat intentions. Guests value attentive, friendly, and knowledgeable service (Ali et al., 2021). Personalized interactions that recognize individual preferences and anticipate needs create memorable experiences, fostering customer loyalty and encouraging repeat visits.

Ambiance and Atmosphere: A hotel restaurant's ambiance and overall atmosphere are key factors affecting customer satisfaction and repeat intention. An inviting, well-designed space enhances the dining experience (Hwang & Ok, 2013). Elements such as restaurant decor, lighting, background music, and seating arrangements contribute to the perception of dining quality and influence customers' desire to return. As stated by Nawawi et al. (2018), revisit intention is unique in that it deals with intangible factors such as atmospheric factors.

Consistency and Reliability: Consistency in delivering high-quality experiences is crucial for encouraging repeat intention. Guests seek reliability in food preparation and service delivery (San Lam et al., 2020). Establishing standardized procedures, maintaining quality control, and ensuring uniform service across different visits still boost customers' confidence and positively influence their decision to revisit.

Value for Money: Perceived value for money is critical to customer satisfaction and repeat intent. Guests want to feel that they are receiving fair prices for the quality of food and service provided (Foroudi et al., 2020). Offering competitive pricing, promotions, and loyalty programs can further enhance customer perception of value and contribute to repeat business.

Post-Dining Experience and Feedback: The post-dining experience, which includes follow-up communication and feedback response, can influence repeat intention. According to Han & Hyun (2017), guests who perceive their opinions as valued and addressed are more inclined to make repeat visits. Encouraging feedback, promptly resolving complaints, and expressing gratitude for patronage can build stronger customer connections, leading to increased repeat visits.

Study Framework
Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study. The study involved two independent variables: food quality and service quality, with customer satisfaction as the moderating variable and repeat intention as the dependent variable.

Figure 1: Study Framework
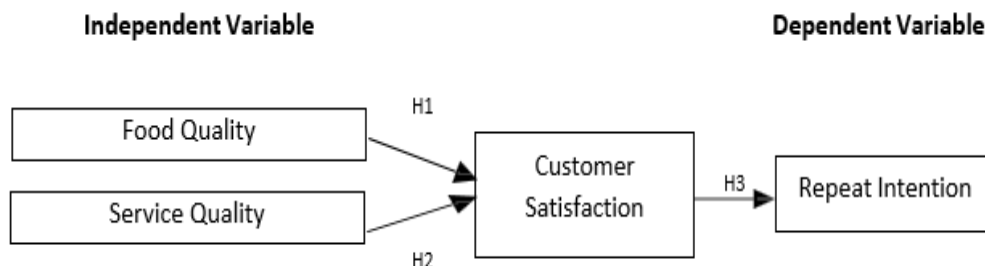
3. Research Methodology

Research Design: This study used a deductive approach to determining causal relationships using structured methodological questionnaires. The questionnaire will only be available to respondents who have previously dined at a hotel restaurant. As a result, future researchers may find this information useful. By employing this strategy, one can ascertain the existence and reasons behind certain phenomena. For example, this study aims to identify aspects of food and service quality that influence customer satisfaction, which in turn may influence a customer's intention to return. We conducted the study in an unstructured environment, as respondents could access the survey from their homes or places of employment. To gather information concerning the level of contentment felt by their customers, we will first administer a questionnaire survey before distributing the level of contentment felt by their customers. The study will use the participants as individual units of analysis. Our primary target audience consists of Malaysians from the general public who have previously eaten in hotels' restaurants. This is because we have a variety of factors that impact customer satisfaction. Consequently, this unit of analysis fits our investigation well.

Population and sampling: According to the Key Findings Population and Housing Census of Malaysia 2020, the total population of Malaysia in 2020 was 32.4 million. The estimated population proportion is 50%, the confidence level is 95%, and the margin of error is 5%. The sample size for this study will be consistent with Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) table, which specifies a sample size of 385 public individuals selected from a total population of 32.4 million in Malaysia.

Instruments and data collection: We adopted a questionnaire from the previous study, which had four sections. Factors to consider include demographic profile, food quality, service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer repeat intention. The survey will use a five-point Likert-type scale (Very satisfied = 5, satisfied = 4, neutral = 3, dissatisfied = 2, and very dissatisfied = 1) to determine the levels of satisfaction with the investigated statements. Therefore, the researchers have adopted a voluntary response sampling method to collect data, inviting the public who have dining experience at hotel restaurants to participate. Meanwhile, the researchers distributed an electronic survey form on Google Forms, utilizing a Quick Response (QR) code to encourage respondents to respond. The respondents will share their personal experiences with dining at hotels and restaurants.

4. Results

This section provides the findings of the analysis, which includes reliability analysis, frequency distribution of demographic profiles, descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, and correlation analysis. The results of this section will establish whether there is a correlation among the course, gender, and age and the preferences for learning methods.

Reliability Analysis: Table 1 displays Cronbach's alpha values for independent and dependent variables. Reliability analysis evaluates the internal consistency of the variable selected by respondents. According to Salkind (2015), Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.8 indicate excellent internal consistency. The table shows that all of the variables in the study have a high level of internal consistency.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha Value

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Food Quality (Independent Variable)	0.800
Service Quality (Independent Variable)	0.810
Customer Satisfaction (Moderating Variable)	0.805
Customer Repeat Intention (Dependent Variable)	0.801

Profile of Respondents: Table 2 reveals that 167 male respondents and 218 female respondents participated in our research. Male respondents account for 43.4%, while female respondents account for 56.6%. The majority of respondents are between the ages of 26 and 35, with 156 respondents accounting for 40.5%. Groups of 18 to 25 years old have 63 respondents (16.36%), and those aged 36 to 45 have 97 respondents (25.2%).

Forty-seven respondents (12.2%) fell within the age group of 46 and 55 years old. Finally, only 5.7% of the total, or 22 respondents, are 56 years and older. Table 2 also reveals the occupations of our survey respondents. A total of 178 respondents, accounting for 46.2%, are students, while 167 respondents, accounting for 43.4%, hold employment. Thirty-four respondents, or 8.8% of the total respondents, are self-employed, whereas six, or 1.6%, are unemployed. The respondents with the highest amount, 176 (45.7%), have a monthly income between RM 1,000 and RM 2,000. Eighty-six respondents have a monthly income of less than RM1,000 (22.3%). Eighty-four respondents fall within RM 2,001 to RM 3,000 (21.8%). The next income bracket, from RM3,001 to RM5,000, accounts for 31 respondents, or 8.1% of the total. Eight respondents, or 2.1% of the total, have a monthly income of more than RM5,000. The data analysis reveals the ethnicity of these respondents. The highest amount, 273 respondents (70.9%), are of Malay ethnicity. Fifty-seven respondents are Chinese, comprising 14.8% of the total respondents. Finally, 28 Indian respondents make up 7.3% of the total respondents.

Table 2: Demographic Profiles of the Respondents

Classification		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	167	43.4
	Female	218	56.6
Age	18-25 Years Old	63	16.36
	26-35 Years Old	156	40.5
	36-45 Years Old	97	25.2
	46-55 Years Old	47	12.2
	56 Years Old and above.	22	5.7
Occupation	Student	178	46.2
	Student	167	43.4
	Employed	34	8.8
	Self-employed	6	1.6
Monthly Income	Less than RM1,000	86	22.3
	RM1,000-RM2,000	176	45.7
	RM2,001-RM3,000	84	21.8
	RM3,001-RM5,000	31	8.1
	More than RM5,000	8	2.1
Ethnic	Malay	273	70.9
	Chinese	57	14.8
	Indian	28	7.3

According to Table 3, of the five food quality items (A), A1 has the highest mean (3.7198) and standard deviation (0.94584), followed by A5 with a mean (3.60077) and standard deviation (1.004743), and A4 with a mean (3.5516) and standard deviation (1.001446). Finally, A3 follows with a mean of 3.3569 and a standard deviation of 1.11977, while A2 follows with a mean of 3.2832 and a standard deviation of 1.18523.

Table 3: Mean and Ranking on the Statement of Food Quality (A)

No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	Is the price of food at the hotel restaurant reasonable?	3.7198	0.94584
2.	Does the food provided meet your taste?	3.2832	1.18523
3.	Is the food in the hotel restaurant prepared in a clean condition?	3.3569	1.11977
4.	Is the food at the hotel restaurant healthy to eat and does it not bring disease?	3.5516	1.001446
5.	Is the appearance of the food prepared at the hotel restaurant very attractive compared to the local restaurants?	3.60077	1.004743

According to Table 4, of the five items in service quality (B), B1 has the highest mean (3.7198) and standard deviation (0.94584), followed by B2 with a mean (3.60077) and standard deviation (1.04743), and B3 with a

mean (3.3717) and standard deviation (1.09486). Next, B4 has a mean of 3.3569 and a standard deviation of 1.11977, while B5 follows with a mean of 3.2832 and a standard deviation of 1.18523.

Table 4: Mean and Ranking on the Statement of Service Quality (B)

No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	Displaying the halal logo, hygiene grade by the Department of Health and Business License.	3.7198	0.94584
2.	Hours and days of operation.	3.6007	1.04743
3.	Options for special requests (Example: Birthday Celebration/ Wedding Anniversary and so on).	3.3717	1.09486
4.	The length of time it takes to complete the booking.	3.3569	1.11977
5.	Treatment provided by hotel restaurant workers.	3.2832	1.18523

According to Table 5, the three items of Customer Satisfaction and Customer Repeat Intention (DV), DV2 has the highest mean (3.5251) and standard deviation (1.06384) followed by DV3 with a mean (3.5044) and standard deviation (1.12889) and lastly, DV1 with a mean (3.3835) and standard deviation (1.01781).

Table 5: Mean and Ranking on Customer Satisfaction and Customer Repeat Intention (DV)

No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	In the future, will you visit the same hotel restaurant if it provides food and service quality Does that satisfy you?	3.3835	1.01781
2.	Your level of satisfaction with the services provided at the hotel restaurant.	3.5251	1.06384
3.	Your level of satisfaction with the food at the hotel restaurant.	3.5044	1.12889

Correlation Analysis: The correlation analysis results in Table 6 show a relationship between three variables influencing customer satisfaction in hotel restaurants' food and service quality, which may affect repeat intention.

Table 6: Correlations of the Variable

Correlations		Price	Social	Home	Local	Decision
Food Quality	Pearson Correlation	1	.709**	.729**	.646**	.149**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	.006
	N	339	339	339	339	339
Service Quality	Pearson Correlation	.709**	1	.716**	.752**	.176**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001	.001
	N	339	339	339	339	339
Customer Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.729**	.716**	1	.691**	.118*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001	.030
	N	339	339	339	339	339

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 indicates that food quality influenced customer satisfaction in hotel restaurants food and service quality with a correlation of r = 0.149 (p = 0.006 < 0.05). Moreover, it also shows that service quality influenced customer satisfaction in hotel restaurants' food and service quality with a correlation of r = 0.118 (p=0.001< 0.05). At the same time, overall customer satisfaction correlates with r =0.118 (p = 0.03 < 0.05).

Discussion

The study aims to examine the relationship between service and food quality, customer satisfaction, and customer repeat intention in hotel restaurants. Table 7 lists the study summary of hypotheses, which is based on Figure 1: Study Frameworks. The following discussion provides evidence of the relationship between the variables:

H1: There is a relationship between food quality and customer satisfaction at hotel restaurants.

The restaurant business heavily relies on the quality of its food. To meet the requirements of the consumer, food quality is crucial (Trivedi & Sama, 2021). To meet the demands and expectations of the consumer, food quality is a crucial factor. Everyone agrees that food quality plays a crucial role in the dining experience. The most significant aspect to consider when choosing a restaurant is the food quality, which directly affects the satisfaction level experienced by patrons. Food quality is a factor in determining a customer's loyalty, and customers judge a restaurant based on the quality of the cuisine served there. "Food quality" encompasses the taste, presentation, temperature, freshness, nutritional value, and variety of menu options (Sari et al., 2024).

Talukder et al. (2023) stated that food quality influences customers' decisions to return to a restaurant. Customers are increasingly interested in academic topics because they perceive the number of items available on a menu as an essential factor in determining the overall quality of the cuisine. The taste quality is a perceptual aspect of food. After ingestion, one may evaluate how something tastes. Despite this, buyers predict the meal's flavor before they consume it based on factors such as price, quality, food labels, and brand name (Wassmann, 2023). The way food tastes is a crucial factor in determining the level of consumer pleasure achieved. The presentation of food can greatly influence the overall dining experience. The customer's expectations regarding the restaurant's commitment to providing nutritious options significantly impact the restaurant they select. The meal's scent, juicy texture, crispiness, and overall fresh posture indicate its recent preparation.

H2: There is a relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction at hotel restaurants.

For decades now, the hospitality sector has placed a significant emphasis on service quality. According to Mola and Jusoh (2011), businesses that provide services must understand their customers' expectations and perceptions, as well as the elements that influence their assessment of the services delivered to them and their level of satisfaction with those services. While this is happening, the focus of service quality is on meeting the requirements previously outlined by the clients. The diversity of service characteristics that customers anticipate receiving is extensive.

Devi et al. (2021) found that these service characteristics influence customers' perceptions of the quality of services they receive. Typically, we evaluate a client's impression of service quality after they have used the service (Ali et al., 2021). In the hospitality industry, the benefits or attributes of service quality encompass an increase in customer satisfaction, positive effects on customer behavioral intentions such as loyalty, retention, and positive word of mouth, as well as increased profitability for the service provider. Marcos et al. (2022) researched the effect of perceived service quality on customer satisfaction. They concluded that an improvement in service quality could lead to an increase in customer satisfaction.

H3: There is a relationship between customer satisfaction and customer retention in hotel restaurants.

Repeat intention, also known as repurchase intention or customer loyalty, is a concept that is similar to those two terms (Law et al., 2022). It refers to consumers' willingness to frequently visit the same location, destination, or person because of the accumulation of positive experiences. In customer service, the word "return intention" refers to the extent to which a client is interested in returning to the same service provider, such as a hairdresser, service center, restaurant, or hotel. Such service providers include a restaurant and a hotel. In the service industry, marketing managers and practitioners are interested in establishing long-term relationships with a concentration on the factors influencing consumer intention to make a repeat purchase because retaining existing customers is more cost-effective than attracting new customers (Fiiwe et al., 2023).

Table 7: Summary of Hypothesis and Results

	Hypothesis	Results
H1	There is a relationship between food quality and customer satisfaction at hotel restaurants.	supported
H2	There is a relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction at the hotel restaurants.	supported
H3	There is a relationship between customer satisfaction and customer retention in hotel restaurants.	supported

5. Managerial Implications and Recommendations

Future research should focus on other age groups, such as business users and international visitors because these demographics are more likely to interact with hotels. This will enable them to reach the intended conclusions and provide definitive answers. Visitors from other countries and business travelers frequent hotel restaurants. In addition, researchers might investigate the elements that impact the likelihood of a customer returning to a particular hotel or restaurant, specifically regarding their income type.

In addition, researchers should evaluate the food and service quality offered at hotel restaurants in Malaysia, such as those in the Hilton Hotel, the Marriott Hotel, and the Genting Hotel. These hotels are popular destinations for both international guests and neighborhood residents (Kumar et al. 2017). The researchers recommend that future studies explore the elements that influence a customer's inclination to return to a hotel or restaurant's service after having previously experienced it, and we endorse this recommendation. As a consequence, this approach can enhance the credibility of the research and improve the accuracy of the results. Lastly, to reliably replicate earlier research findings, we should increase the sample sizes in subsequent research. In addition, a more accurate field representation is possible.

Conclusion
This study aimed to investigate the potential relationship between consumer satisfaction with hotel restaurant food and service quality, and its potential impact on customer repeat intention. The study also explored how different generations value service quality and how their perceptions of its importance influence customer repeat intention. Specifically, this research wanted to determine whether or not there is a relationship between customer satisfaction with hotel restaurant food and service quality. The most convincing conclusion from a quantitative study was that service quality has a reasonably significant influence on customer satisfaction, with the impact appearing to be more significant when service quality reaches high levels. We reached this conclusion after examining the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, data suggests that service quality can positively impact brand retention. On the other hand, the effect has become substantially more important when the service quality is outstanding or at a very high level. This aligns with the findings of previous research on the subject.

Overall, this study adds to the existing literature by conducting a thorough analysis of the factors that influence customer satisfaction and repeat intention in the hotel restaurant context, as well as making actionable recommendations to industry practitioners. Future research could benefit from examining how customer satisfaction and repeat intention change over time using longitudinal methods. Comparing these factors across different types of hotel restaurants, such as luxury and budget, could provide useful insights for tailoring strategies. Furthermore, researching the role of digital tools, cultural influences, and employee perspectives can provide a more comprehensive understanding of what motivates guest loyalty. Exploring how non-price factors such as ambiance and menu variety affect satisfaction, as well as evaluating the effects of crises, will aid in the development of more comprehensive strategies for maintaining and increasing customer loyalty in hotel restaurants.

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