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Determinants of Social Networking Usage and Regret in Two Cultural Settings: France and Thailand

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Abstract

Regret is an unpleasant outcome of social networking sites (SNS) usage which is exponentially experienced and could negatively affect the continuance intention to social networking on SNS. In this paper, we address this issue with reference to the Uses and Gratification Theory and position interpersonal connectivity, entertainment, exhibitionism and voyeurism as determinants of social networking usage and also of social networking regret. We investigate how actual social networking usage could lead to regret and how both could affect the continuous intention of social networking usage on Facebook. The model is tested within two samples representing a Western culture (France, N=246) and an Asian culture (Thailand, N=206 respectively). Our results show that SNS usage and regret are experienced differently by the two samples. To date, empirical works that investigate SNS usage and regret in a multicultural setting have been rare. This paper contributes to filling this theoretical and empirical gap.

Keywords

Online Social Networking, Interpersonal Connectivity, Cultural Differences, Regret.

Introduction

While the use of social media is extensively increasing throughout the world, the number of people who regret their behaviors in these online socialization platforms is increasing as well. According to a YouGov Omnibus survey (2015)¹, more than half of American social media users have experienced regret about what they have posted or how they have reacted to others' posts. Deleting one's own social media content is also a concern for many people, presumably because of regret.

Prior research on Social Networking Sites (SNS) usage has reported differences due to culture in time spent, importance and motives for the use, levels of engagement, intentions to disclose and privacy concerns (Krasnova et al., 2012; Xie and Kang, 2015; Ifinedo, 2016; Liu et al., 2016; Makri and Schlegelmilch, 2017). However, very little attention has been paid to cultural differences related to re-

¹ https://www.huffpost.com/entry/more-than-half-of-america_b_7872514

gret experienced in social media whereas it is recognized, in other disciplines such as psycho-sociology, that people who belong to different cultures do not behave the same way when they are confronted to regret situations (Komiya et al., 2011; Breugelmans et al., 2014). The aim of this paper is to contribute to filling this gap by investigating the determinants of social networking on Facebook, and how these determinants could lead to regret. We then examine the joined effect of usage and regret on the continuous intention to use Facebook. Building on Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), we assume that different psychological motives, that could be more or less socially acceptable, determine why people engage in social networking activities, and under what circumstances they could experience regret. Two cultural settings: France and Thailand are considered. Many SNS, and especially Facebook are deployed and used globally. However, this does not necessarily mean that they have to use global standards and ignore local and regional differences. This paper would therefore provide practical insights with regard to how to customize SNS functionalities depending on the cultural identity of the users in order to enhance the continuance usage and therefore the sustainability and the competitive advantage of these services. We have chosen to study Facebook because it is extensively used throughout the world and is undeniably popular in the two countries under study. As for many other SNS, continuous usage is a great concern for Facebook in particular, since it is coping with a fierce competition from regional SNS and more specialized newcomers who seem to provide more appealing online networking services to younger generations (Wilson, 2016).

In the following sections, we first define the theoretical background that helped us to develop our hypotheses and research model. Then, we present data analyses and results, before discussing the implications, limits and future avenues of this research.

Background Theory and Research Hypotheses

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Grounded in sociology, UGT has served for the last three decades as a theoretical backbone to explain how and why people choose to use certain media devices to satisfy specific human needs (Katz et al., 1974). Recently employed in the SNS usage literature (Ifinedo, 2016; Mäntymäki and Islam, 2016), this theory stipulates that media use is driven by valued outcomes, called gratifications, which help to fulfil certain individual and social needs. In the case of SNS, we can talk about personal visibility, social enhancement, entertainment, information seeking (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). These gratifications are considered as socially acceptable motives that stem from the needs to belong, learn and socialize, whereas other motives could cross the line of social acceptability. Previous research has, for example, reported exhibitionism and voyeurism as negative or 'dark side' drivers of SNS use (Fisher et al., 2016; Mäntymäki and Islam, 2016). For exhibitionists, the need to belong to the community could be overwhelming and potentially strengthened by the necessity to become the center of the attention of that community, whereas for the voyeurs, the need to know about every detail of the lives of the other members becomes irrepressible. We argue in this paper that it is important to capture the multifaceted or dual (positive and negative) nature of SNS use motives, and their consequences in terms of regret (presumably when needs are not fulfilled as expected). We use four categories of UGT gratifications: interpersonal connectivity and entertainment value (for the positive side), and exhibitionism and voyeurism (for the negative side). Interpersonal connectivity refers to the benefit an individual derives from establishing and maintaining contact with other people in an online network. Following many research studies that have reported this construct as a determinant of networking usage (Smock et al., 2011; Tsai and Bagozzi, 2014; Ifinedo, 2016; Islam et al., 2019), we formulate our first hypothesis:

H1: Interpersonal connectivity is positively related to social networking usage on Facebook.

Entertainment value is the enjoyment users derive from online networking. It has also been widely recognized as a determinant of social networking (Reinecke et al., 2014; Ifinedo, 2016). Accordingly, we hypothesize:

H2: Networking Entertainment is positively related to social networking usage on Facebook.

Online self-promotion is part of the process of social enhancement. When it is exaggerated and subject to a deficiency in self-regulation, it could lead to exhibitionism. Considered in psychology as part of a narcissistic personality, exhibitionism is characterized by an obsessive self-grandiosity concern that

could serve as a motive to use SNS. In this case, the user aims to take profit from the digital exposure gratification (Munar, 2010), i.e., put bluntly, the need to show off online, which appears to be a popular behavioral phenomenon on SNS. Therefore, an emergent body of research has started to investigate exhibitionism among the determinant factors of SNS use (Panek et al., 2013; Fisher et al., 2016; Mäntymäki and Islam, 2016; Errasti et al., 2017). We decide to follow this path and formulate our third hypothesis:

H3: Exhibitionism is positively related to social networking usage on Facebook.

The idea that media and communication tools are massively transforming people on potential voyeurs is not new (Calvert, 2000). It seems however that this trend is accentuated in social media, due to what is called social surveillance, i.e. a form of a systematic and sustained information seeking about the other members of the online community (Lee, 2014). Social surveillance becomes voyeurism when the user derives psychological value from accessing the private details of others. Whereas it is deemed deviant, voyeurism is part of the social value gratifications attributed to SNS, and is thereby considered as a determinant factor of social networking on Facebook (Fisher et al., 2016; Islam et al., 2018). Thus, our fourth hypothesis:

H4: Voyeurism is positively related to social networking usage on Facebook.

Regret from SNS Usage

Regret can be defined as a negative emotion we may experience when a situation would have been better if we had done something different (Zeelenberg and Pieters, 1982). Research on regret is originally rooted in economics and decision-making theory (Bell, 1982; Loomes et al., 1982), where it has been addressed through the instrumental rationality and expected utility toolkit. Studies on regret have then concerned other domains, starting with psycho-sociology (Kahneman and Tversky, 1982; Landman, 1987), marketing (Lee and Cotte, 2009), organizational behavior (van Dijk and Zeelenberg, 2005) and more recently technology mediated communication, especially SNS use (Moore and McElroy, 2012; Kaur et al., 2016).

Consensually in all these fields, regret is depicted as a counterfactual emotion that relies on comparison processes related both to decisions to act and decisions not to act. However, action and inaction are not regretted equally. Research on behavioral economics and human decision-making has demonstrated that outcomes achieved through action produce more regret than the same outcomes achieved through inaction (Feldman and Albarracin, 2017). Now, what are the actions that SNS users regret the most and why? Through the study of regret experienced and expressed on Twitter, Summerville and Buchanan (2014) argued that SNS interactions provide a space to a category of regret relevant to social relationships that is more intense than no-social regrets and that stems from the self-conscious emotion that for certain reasons, we may have acted in a socially inappropriate way and violated certain social norms. Regret could then be privately or publicly experienced and in certain circumstances expressed. In both cases, it plays a social regulatory function aimed at reducing the negative impacts of the regretted acts. In a qualitative study of regret on Facebook, Wang et al. (2011) sorted the most regretted incidents on this platform, which are: (1) highly emotional 'hot states' posts; those containing a sexual, religious or political content; and (2) posts sent to and/or seen by an unintended audience or by the intended one, which has reacted in an unpredictable way. Sleeper *et al.* (2013) have found similar results in their study of regrets on Twitter.

Self-presentation concerns have also been identified as an antecedent of untagging behavior on social media (Birnholtz et al., 2017). For Sorokowska et al. (2016), a positive significant link exists between exhibitionism and the activity of posting self-portraits photographs on social media. Some of these could lead to embarrassment, shame, humiliation of the self or others, and consequently to regret.

We propose in this article to test the relationship between exhibitionism and its counterpart behavior voyeurism on SNS regrets. Following Fisher et al. (2016), watching and being watched on SNS are intimately linked and are part of the process of production and consumption of the self. This process is close to the exhibitionism/voyeurism dyad defined by the philosopher Michel Foucault (1986) (in an offline context) as the core of the discourse that produces the socially constructed identity of the self, and that could also be transposed in an online context (Kreps, 2010). Based on this rationale, we hypothesize:

H5: Exhibitionism is positively related to social networking regret on Facebook

H6: Voyeurism is positively related to social networking regret on Facebook

In the literature on SNS regret, other factors are also reported, such as disconfirmation of the users' expectations, personality traits (Moore and McElroy, 2012), demographic specificities: to our knowledge age but not gender (Xie and Kang, 2015; Dhir et al., 2016); and actual use, that is the most people use SNS the more they are likely to experience regret. This assumption has been empirically supported by Dhir et al. (2016) for Facebook. Accordingly, we formulate:

H7: Social Networking Usage is positively related to social networking regret on Facebook.

SNS Continuance Intention

For more than a decade now, there is a spate of interest in SNS continuance studies, since it appears that businesses highly value the continued interaction of customers with their brand pages (Shi et al., 2016). Besides, SNS services providers are extensively interested in identifying the key factors that affect their users' attachment to their sites; Continued usage being necessary to the long-term sustainability of these platforms (Ku et al., 2013). SNS continuance is part of the IT post-adoptive stream of research developed within the Management Information Systems Field. Based on the Past-Adoptive Model (PAM) (Bhattacharjee, 2001), continuance intention was assessed using a wide range of determinants, amidst them actual usage is reported as an important explaining factor (Barnes and Böhlinger, 2011; Lin et al., 2014). We therefore formulate our hypothesis:

H8: Networking usage is positively related to social networking continuous intention on Facebook

Finally, one can intuitively assume that networking regret would negatively affect social networking continuance intention, but literature supporting this assertion is rare, with a few exceptions (Kefi, 2017; Gan and Lee, 2018). To enhance the investigation about the relationship between networking regret and networking continuance intention on SNS, we decide to formulate and test our final research hypothesis:

H9: Social networking regret is negatively related to networking continuance intention on Facebook

Cultural Differences Effect on SNS usage, Continuance and Regret

The exponentially growing usage of SNS is a global phenomenon. For instance, Facebook monthly active users have exceeded 2.13 billion with 14 percent increase year over year all over the world (Source: Facebook 01/31/18). A legitimate question arises here about whether this usage differs across countries and cultures. Studies in this research area started with Boyd and Ellison (2007) who made the important assumption according to which the intrinsic specificities of SNS can have different impacts through cultures. The study conducted in USA, France, China and South Korea by Chapman and Lahav (2008) concluded that these different impacts concern three domains: user goals and expectations; typical pattern of self-expression, and typical interaction behaviors. From a UGT perspective, this means that SNS gratifications can have different determining roles of SNS usage when users endorse different cultural values (Ifinedo, 2016).

As argued by Vitkauskaite (2010), most studies about the cultural differences impacts on SNS use are based on Hofstede (1980) cultural dimensions and especially the individualism/collectivism index that can be defined as "people looking after themselves and their immediate family only, versus people belonging to in-groups that look after them in exchange for loyalty" (de Mooij and Hofstede, 2010). According to Chau (2008), this cultural dimension is totally relevant to emphasize different perceptions and impacts of web 2.0 technologies, among them SNS. Concerning the interactions between the construct of regret and culture in the context of SNS use, to the best of our knowledge, studies on this subject are extremely rare. This article is therefore potentially contributing to fill an important research gap, given the fact that as SNS usage is extending globally, regret behavior is following the same trend. Cultural variation in the experience of regret has nevertheless been investigated in offline situations, for example in decision-making and marketing. Interestingly, regret has been studied in multicultural settings concerning interpersonal situations, where the individual is interacting with other people who potentially could be affected by these interactions, versus intrapersonal situations (with possible regret about outcomes affecting the self). We consider in this paper active SNS use (posting content, liking and commenting others' comments) and thus study cultural variation (France and Thailand) in interpersonal action regret experienced on SNS. In this case, many studies consensually concluded that regret is more intensely experienced in Asian collectivist cultures than in Western individualistic ones :

Taiwan compared to USA, Netherlands and Israel in the study of (Breugelmans et al., 2014); and Japan compared to the USA in (Komiya et al., 2011).

In this study, we find out whether our results are consistent with this proposition. We test the 9 hypotheses of our model (depicted in figure1) within two cultural settings: France and Thailand.

Research Model and Methodology

Measurement Development

We drew on previous scales and conceptualizations of interpersonal connectivity, networking entertainment, exhibitionism, voyeurism, networking usage and continuance intention. All of these constructs are reflexive and measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (see table 1 for the items used and their references). The items measuring networking regret were developed for the present study. We first asked 24 master's level students of an international program (including students from France, Unites States, Russia, Morocco, India and Thailand), to describe common scenarios that lead to regret in the SNS context. They have described 11 scenarios. We then invited a total of 10 doctoral students and academics (from France, Tunisia and Thailand) to review and rank the scenarios based on their relevance. They have to assess how likely each scenario would occur using a five point scale: (1) very unlikely - - - (5) very likely. Four scenarios have been eliminated because they have received a majority of unlikely measures. As an outcome of this process, we obtained six items measuring networking regret. Respondents will have to evaluate how often they experienced these six regret situations with respect to their use of Facebook. We then pilot tested the survey instrument with a sample of 45 Facebook users. The questionnaire originally written in English (the items for the literature are formulated in English, and so are the regret items) was then translated in French (by the first author) and in Thai (by the second author). Both versions were then back-translated by two other scholars. A few items were slightly but not significantly reformulated at the end of this process.

Survey Administration

The two questionnaires were administered online. We collected responses from a sample of 246 French and 204 Thai Facebook users. We can notice here that over 80% of our respondents are under 35 years old and are mainly students or freshly graduated Alumni from French and Thai schools and universities. This means that the population targeted corresponds in majority to the millennial generation that represents the largest portion of Facebook users². The gender composition of the sample represents 65% of females/ 35% of males for the French sub-sample and 52% of females/48% of males for the Thai one.

Data Analysis & Results

We relied on the partial least squares (PLS) approach using SmartPLS 3.2.7 to test our model. PLS allows modeling latent variables without requiring strictly normal distributions of data (Chin, 1998; Hair et al., 2012). In addition, according to a simulation study, using the PLS approach has its merits in case of relatively small samples (Henseler et al., 2014).

Psychometric Validity Evaluation

Overall, the measurement properties of all multi-item measures are good (Table 1). The outer loadings of all indicators as well as the scores of the constructs' composite reliability and average variance extracted exceed the common threshold values (Hair et al., 2017). Using the Fornell and Larcker (1981), we observe no discriminant validity problems among the latent constructs in the sample (Table 2).

Latent variables with indicators ^a	Loading ^b	Alpha	Compo-	Average	Selected ref-
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² <https://zephoria.com/top-15-valuable-facebook-statistics/>

		Cr	site reliability	Variance Expected	References
Interpersonal Connectivity		0.778	0.871	0.693	Dholakia et al. (2004)
Using Facebook makes it easier to stay in touch with my friends	0.770				
Using Facebook helps me stay updated on how my friends are doing	0.885				
Using Facebook helps me get information about people (I know or I would like to know)	0.838				
Entertainment		0.751	0.855	0.664	Shi et al. (2016)
All in all, using Facebook entertains me	0.848				
Interacting with other members of Facebook is amusing	0.876				
Following Facebook Fan pages entertains me	0.711				
Exhibitionism		0.932	0.967	0.936	Ames et al. (2006); Mantymaki & Islam (2016)
I really like to be the center of attention on Facebook	0.888				
I am apt to show off on Facebook if I have the chance	0.868				
I get upset when people don't comment/put a like on my posts in Facebook	0.728				
Voyeurism		0.822	0.895	0.741	Nabi et al. (2006); Mantymaki & Islam (2016)
I enjoy viewing others' photos/videos no matter if I know them or not	0.779				
I like watching people when they don't know that they are being watched	0.919				
I get satisfaction out of watching others when they are unaware	0.877				
Networking Usage		0.774	0.869	0.689	Chen et al. (2015)
Posting status/photos /videos/blogs/articles	0.781				
Liking friends' posts	0.841				
Commenting friends' posts or comments	0.866				
Networking Regret		0.852	0.892	0.584	New scale
Liking posts	0.582				
Commenting posts	0.682				
Publishing pictures & messages that may affect my relationship to people I care about	0.841				
Publishing pictures & messages that may affect my reputation at work	0.839				
Commenting in the heat of the moment. Without thinking about the consequences	0.809				
Publishing pictures & messages that may have offended other people	0.814				
Networking Continuous intention		0.919	0.949	0.861	Lin & Bhattacherjee (2008) Gwebu et al. (2014)
I intend to continue using Facebook over the next one month	0.941				
I intend to continue using Facebook over the next one year	0.938				
I intend to continue using Facebook in the near future rather than not use it	0.905				

Table 1. Reliability and convergent validity

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Continuous intention to use (1)	0.928						
Exhibitionism (2)	0.176	0.831					
Interpersonal connectivity (3)	0.410	0.433	0.832				
Networking regret (4)	-0.030	0.451	0.217	0.764			
Networking usage (5)	0.407	0.421	0.426	0.301	0.830		
Voyeurism (6)	0.249	0.559	0.448	0.357	0.354	0.861	
Entertainment (7)	0.401	0.528	0.636	0.293	0.484	0.465	0.815

Table 2. Discriminant validity Fornell-Larker Criterion

Structural Model Evaluation

We estimated the structural model for the global sample (N= 450) using the bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrapping method with 5000 subsamples. As shown in Figure 1, we found support for all hypotheses but H4, i.e. the path between voyeurism and networking usage on Facebook. All the other path estimates in the global structural model are significant at least at 5% level.

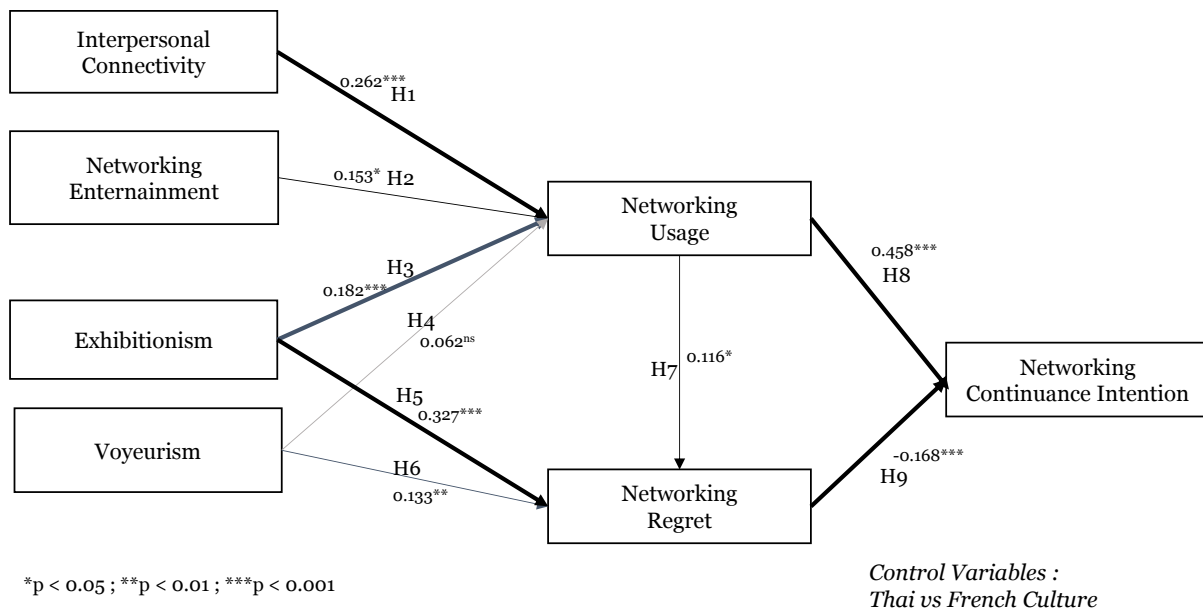


Figure1. Research results for the global sample

To test cultural differences, we conducted a multiple-group analysis (MGA). Following the recommendations of Hair et al.(2017), we relied on a permutation test with 5000 subsamples to assess the differences between path coefficients, significance and explained variance (R²) respectively for each subsample. Results are shown in table 3. As expected, H4 is rejected for both sub-samples. The R² for the explained variables are acceptable and it appears that R² related to networking regret is significantly higher in the Thai sample. There are also significant differences between the two cultural settings. H1 and H9 are rejected in the Thai sub-sample, whereas they are accepted within French respondents. At the contrary, H6 and H7 are rejected in the French sub-sample and accepted in the Thai one.

Paths	French Sample			Thai Sample		
	Path Coefficients	T Stat	Hypothesis	Path Coefficients	T Stat	Hypothesis

H1: Interpers_Connec → Networking Usage	0.240**	3.373	Supported	0.117 ^{ns}	1.150	Rejected
H2: Entertainment → Networking Usage	0.269**	3.473	Supported	0.279*	2.770	Supported
H3: Exhibitionism → Networking Usage	0.242***	4.044	Supported	0.244*	2.841	Supported
H4: Voyeurism → Networking Usage	-0.013 ^{ns}	0.248	Rejected	0.119 ^{ns}	1.217	Rejected
H5: Exhibitionism → Networking Regret	0.252**	2.897	Supported	0.267**	3.241	Supported
H6: Voyeurism → Networking Regret	0.078 ^{ns}	1.276	Rejected	0.190**	2.614	Supported
H7: Networking Usage → Networking Regret	0.089 ^{ns}	1.332	Rejected	0.284***	3.675	Supported
H8: Networking Usage → Continuance Intention	0.447***	6.557	Supported	0.439***	5.843	Supported
H9: Networking Regret → Continuance Intention	-0.171**	3.221	Supported	-0.107 ^{ns}	1.415	Rejected
	R ² NW-Usage= 0.549 ; R ² NW-Regret= 0.206; R ² C-Intention= 0.297			R ² NW-Usage= 0.512 ; R ² NW-Regret= 0.465 R ² C-Intention= 0.230		

Table 3. Findings of the two samples: French and Thai

Discussion & Conclusion

Our results show that the common determinants of networking usage for French and Thai Facebook users are entertainment and exhibitionism gratifications, exhibitionism being more significant for French than Thai users. Nevertheless, Thai users (unlike the French ones) do not appear to be motivated by interpersonal connectivity when networking on Facebook. Regret appears also to be differently experienced by the two groups of users. Within the representatives of the Thai culture, it is positively related to exhibitionism, voyeurism and networking usage; whereas it does not affect continuance intention of networking usage on Facebook. Concerning French users, regret derives only from exhibitionism and it affects negatively networking continuance intention. These results are consistent with previous researches which demonstrated that SNS usage and continuous of usage differ within different cultures (Jackson and Wang, 2013; Alarcon-del-Amo et al., 2016). An important contribution of our work is also the confirmation that, as for offline settings, regret in online settings, and especially on SNS interpersonal interactions, is more intensively experienced within Asian (collective) than Western (individualistic) cultures (Komiya, 2011; Breugelmans et al., 2014). However, continuance intention to use Facebook is more critical to French users than it is the case for Thai ones. French users are more likely to switch SNS than their Thai counterparts. Due to space limitations, a more detailed discussion of the results of our work, its limitations, theoretical and empirical implications will be included in the journal version of this paper. Further analyses and findings will be presented and discussed during the conference. They concern the control variables we included in the analyses, namely gender and age and their impacts within the two sub-samples; and also the role of privacy concerns as a mediating variable between networking usage, networking regret and continuous networking intention.

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