

FACTORS INFLUENCING GLOBAL TOURISM SPACE OF POLISH TOURISTS: AGE AND GENDER

KRZYSZTOF KASPRZAK AND MATYLDA
AWEDYK

UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION, POLAND

Abstract

After the political transformation in Poland new opportunities for discovering the world have been opened to Polish citizens. Regions unavailable before 1989 are now a new geographic and cultural space to explore for Polish tourists and are the goal of outbound sightseeing tourism. Trips to the farthest places on the earth organized by travel agencies have a large number of participant despite very high prices. Information about Polish tourists activity in outbound sightseeing tourism were obtained through data analysis from sales leader in Polish tourism market. Each time the source of information was a civil-law contract for the provision of tourism services signed between the tour operator and the client. Obtained data lead to conclusions not only about tourist destinations and its seasonality but also on the impact of social and demographic factors on destinations of travel, length thereof and seasonality of trips chosen by tourists. Results of studies showed significant changes in outbound sightseeing tourism trends in Poland since 90's of XX century. Still the biggest group of the tourists taking part in exotic tourism are wealthy citizens of the age of over 40 years, however, with participation of younger tourists increasing. Also, older tourists who used to choose destinations with well organized tourist infrastructure and stable political are more and more willing to visit places where standard of travel remains still quite low. According to forecasts exotic tourism destinations of Polish citizens will change together with actual trends and intensity of influence of exogenous and endogenous factors. It is assumed that global character of tourist space will have the same attributes for Poles as it has for every tourist traveling around the world - it will be available.

The rule for traveling abroad is to take our common sense with us and leave our prejudices behind.

The object of traveling is to see and learn (William Hazlitt, 1826).

1. Introduction

The geographical space beyond Europe and its functionally distinct subcomponent of tourist space are amazing regions which have long attracted tourists from around the world. With their vast and distinctive cultural, social and biological diversity, the regions capture the imaginations of tourists hungry for impressions and adventure. Quite frequently, and particularly in the case of older people, travel to distant exotic regions is a way to fulfill the dreams of youth. Regions of the global space (the mega-space) are large geographical areas of concentrated demographic, economic, scientific and cultural potential of global significance. While such areas vary internally, they are devoid of any substantial barriers to the free movement of persons, goods, information and capital. Fascinating as they are, the diverse life and the resulting cultural diversity found in such remote regions often appears to be just as chaotic. Asia, Africa, the Middle East and South and Middle Americas have long been highly volatile and subject to rapid social and political change. Tourists, however, are attracted to the biological and cultural diversity expressed in the exotic ways of former as well as existing civilizations. To see and absorb it all, people young and old, male and female, in fact anyone hungry for new experiences who possesses the requisite means, venture into the global space.

The paper discusses the role of tourist age and gender, the two primary external determinants of interest in tourism, as factors for choosing educational tours to various global destinations outside of Europe.

2. Age and Gender as Exogenous Factors

Even enumerating, not to mention classifying, the sheer multitude of the factors that drive growth in tourism presents a daunting task (Wodejko, 1998: 66).

It is even difficult to identify the key immediate and “specific” factors which have turned tourism from a trend of marginal socio-economic significance into a popular pursuit with a potential for huge economic gains and serious social and cultural implications (Alejziak, 2001: 40).

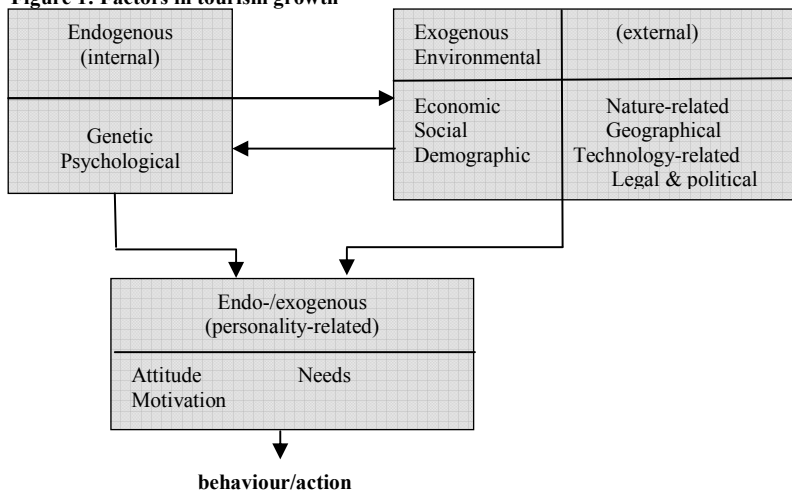
The literature describes many research projects designed to explain and define the motivations that underpin recreational and tourist behaviors. The WTO lists over 130 factors that drive tourism. All such classifications and criteria seem to be arbitrary with individual factors varying in influence depending on circumstances and settings. A classification of factors affecting human behavior has been provided by Alicja

Krzymowska-Kostrowicka (Krzymowska-Kostrowicka, 1995: 30) who differentiated endogenous factors such as genetic, psychogenetic, psycho-physiological and genetic/health-related predispositions from exogenous, i.e. environmental and socio-cultural determinants. In her classification, the environmental factors included nature-related, technological, ergonomic and pathological influences whereas socio-cultural ones encompassed historical/cultural, social, information-related/educational and indoctrination-related factors.

All human behavior is a function of multiple endogenous and exogenous factors which vary in the influence they exert. Such factors trigger specific responses which, at a particular time and place and in specific circumstances, lead people to exhibit specific behaviors, adopt specific attitudes, make specific choices and decisions and be driven by specific motivations.

For the purposes of this study, whose main concern is with factors that drive people to travel for tourist purposes, Alicja Krzymowska-Kostrowicka's model has been slightly readjusted to highlight the factors that are most likely to contribute to growth in tourism. The resulting classification is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Factors in tourism growth



Source: Awedyk (2009: 17)

3. Gender

Gender-based differences in tourist pursuits follow from two sets of factors, one rooted in the biological and psychological constitution of man, the other in the social context. The former sees gender as an amalgamation of biological and psychological specificities manifesting themselves mainly in the realm of interests and as the physical propensity to engage in tourist activities. The latter is an expression of cultural traditions and any related past and contemporary male and female behavioral patterns (Bomirska, Lidia, Gawlak-Kica and Edward Kraśnicki 1988: 24).

As shown by research, gender affects demand for tourist services. H. Robinson (Robinson, 1976, quoted after: Kuciński 1981: 71), for instance, suggested that tourism follows the patterns identified by geographers in their studies of steady migrations. These have demonstrated that women are more likely than men to accept changes of settings. On that basis, H. Robinson postulated that "...women are more likely than men to engage in tourist migrations". Other studies show that the choice of tourist activities largely follows gender lines (McIntosh, Powerm and Jonathan Reed, 1996: 91-115). This concerns not only the choice of destinations but also the forms and ways in which tourism is pursued (McGehee, Loker-Murphy and Uysal 1996: 45-57). Small's (2003) study of young and mature (above 40) female Australians shows their tendency to view tourism as a way to dispel gender stereotypes, establish women's freedom and demonstrate their emancipation (Small, 2003: 31-39).

4. Age

In terms of demographics, demand for tourism is driven by age. As human life expectancy has been rising steadily, developed nations have lowered their retirement age while posting an increase in the quality of life and overall progress.

As of late, demographics have undergone radical structural modifications accompanied by changes in lifestyle and consumption patterns across all age groups. The impact of these developments on tourism has been so profound as to require a major overhaul of views on the links between age and tourist activity, particularly with respect to senior citizens. Economic growth and advances in medicine have contributed to the emergence of a whole new brand of pensioners who are not only much more populous than the previous generations but also very different. They are the healthiest and richest "elderly people in human history engaged in tourism to an unprecedented extent (especially shortly

after retirement)”. This has been demonstrated by studies conducted in more than a dozen European Union member states, particularly in Germany where, in the last 30 years, tourist activity has risen in the two top age groups of 60-69 and over 70 (Alejziak, 2009: 217 and 226). Many reports stress that financially secure pensioners have become “the core of tourism growth” (World Tourism Organization Business Council, 1999: 140). Yet, the foregoing is not true for Poland where only a small percentage of pensioners can afford to travel abroad, especially to remote regions.

As foreign tours to destinations outside of Europe offered by travel agencies carry a hefty price tag, a growing number of tourists who select them are people who chose to rely on their long-time savings for their enjoyment. This is also true for persons who have retired and have generous leisure time at their disposal. They are free to travel at a “more affordable” time, i.e. off-season.

Age has not only been linked to the volume of tourist traffic but also found to affect the preferred forms of tourism and recreation. It is a decisive factor in selecting specific forms of tourism, means of transport, forms of accommodation (which translate into the overall amount and breakdown of spending on tourism), durations of stay, seasons and destinations.

5. Research Methodology

Information on Poles’ involvement in outbound sightseeing tours beyond Europe has been derived from data on the leading provider of such tourist products in Poland. Specifically, such information came from the individual tourist service contracts concluded by the agency and its clients. Information from such contracts regarding tourist age, gender, place of residence and occupation was applied not only in analyzing tourist destinations and seasonal variations but also in studies of the impact of social and demographic factors on destination, tour durations, seasons and prices. The survey of educational tours outside of Europe covered the two time periods of 1998-2002 and 2003-2007. The part concerned with the former period included 3066 tourists while the latter covered 7793. The tourists visited 42 countries in the regions of Africa, South and Central Americas, North America, the Middle East, Australia and Oceania, Asia, Antarctica or went on tours around the world.

To verify the postulated link between the choice of destination and tourist gender and age, the author employed a statistical technique suited for such verification, i.e. the chi square test. The correlation between

direction and gender was/is found to be statistically significant (chi square = 16.35, $p < .05$). The correlation between direction and age also was/is found to be statistically significant (chi square = 147.72, $p < .05$).

6. Findings

In the 1998-2002 period, the sharpest rise in the popularity of tours to non-European destinations took place in 1999 with the number of tourists increasing by 34.8% on 1998. Other than this exceptional rise, the number of tours sold, subject to only slight year-on-year fluctuations, was more than 1500. Nevertheless, the number of Poles going on tours outside of Europe grew ever faster every year. The study included the year 2000 which began the new millennium and that was also covered by the study period. Although the number of tours during that year increased by a mere 5.8% on 1999, it nevertheless exceeded those seen in the following years. A very modest rise in the popularity of tours beyond Europe was recorded in 2001. This rise of a mere 0.2% on the preceding year, viewed in fact as a brief collapse in the international tourist travel market, followed the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. 2002 saw the number of tours to non-European destinations climb by 4.3% on the preceding year proving the 2001 downturn to have been short-lived. In 2002, the participation rate in such tours was up by 49.1% on 1998.

The fastest growing destination as selected by Polish travelers outside of Europe was Asia (Figure 1). From 1998 to 2002, such tours represented 34% of the market share. The region accounted for only 21.6% of all tours in 1998, 39.4% in 2000 and 33.1% in 2001.

Africa featured strongly among other destinations highly popular with tourists (18.5% of all tours taken from 1998 to 2002) followed by Central and South America (17.8%).

This differed from trends in travel to Central and South America. In 2002, the region ranked among the most popular destinations on the globe accounting for 35.6% of all tours, which was even ahead of Asia (33.1% of all tours taken in 2002).

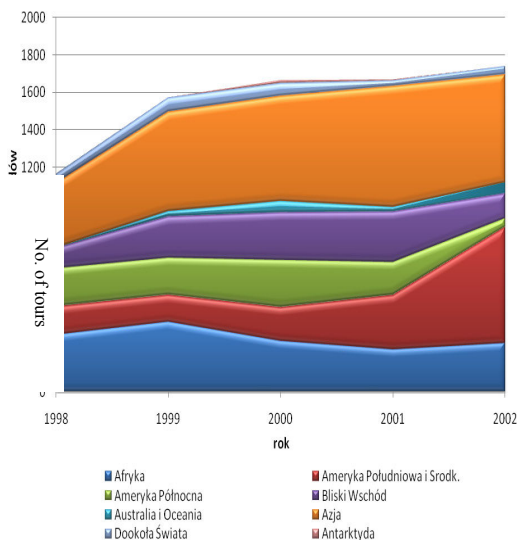
The above-mentioned decline in interest in North America was a direct consequence of the terrorist attacks on the USA of September 11, 2001. The popularity of tours to that continent in 2001 fell by 30% on the year 2000 and continued to slide through 2002 to a mere 18.6% compared to the 2000 benchmark. Tours to North America amounted to 17.6% of all tours held in 1998 and to a mere 2.7% of all tours taken in 2002.

Political developments in the Middle East discouraged an increasing number of tourists from venturing into that part of the world. In 2002,

Middle Eastern tours accounted for only 7.6% of all tours held during that year and represented a sharp drop on 2000 and 2001 when tourist travel to the region stood at 15.6% and 16.1% respectively.

Poles took increasing interest in visiting Australia and New Zealand (up by 106% on 1999). Although the region's popularity remained rather low at a mere 2.3% of all tours held from 1998 to 2002, it continued to grow steadily. From a modest 1.9% of all tours taken in 1999, trips down under rose to 3.5% by 2002.

Figure 1: Participation in educational tours to non-European countries in 1998-2002 by direction



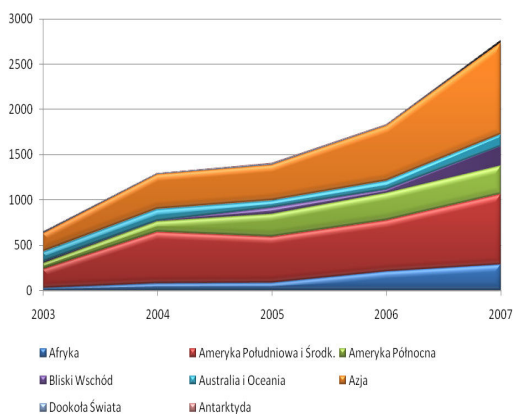
A small but relatively stable segment comprised tours around the world. These tours were nearly halved between 1998 and 2002 from 4.2% to 2.4% of all tourist travel in the aftermath of 9/11 as many of the most frequented round-the-world routes crossed US territory. The route's popularity in 2001 slumped by 56.7% on the preceding year only to recover 44% in the following year. Round-the-world tours accounted for 3.4% of all tourist travel during that period.

Antarctica was visited on two occasions during the study period putting its market share at a mere 0.23% of the all-destination total. Exorbitant prices seemed to have been the primary deterrent.

The most popular tourist destinations in the following survey period of 2003-2007 were Asia as well as Central and South America (Figure 2). Both exceeded 30% of all tours held during that time (with South and Central America at 33.15% and Asia at 32.73%). Similarly to 1998-2002, tourists were least likely to select the highest priced tours, including round-the-world tours, which amounted to 0.77% of all tours held during the period, and tours to Antarctica, which amounted to 0.39% of that total.

A study of the rise in outbound sightseeing tours to non-European destinations points to 2007 as a peak year for all destinations (up by 50.5% on 2006). The greatest number of tourists selected the Middle East (up by 436.2%), tours around the world (up by 112.5%), Asia (up by 66.3%), South and Central America (up by 37.6%) and Africa (up by 36.8%).

Figure 3: Participation in educational tours to non-European countries in 2003-2007 by direction



During the 1998-2002 period, 53.4% (or a slight majority) of the 3066 surveyed tourists were women (Table 1). A study of the breakdown of the tourist population by age and gender concluded that both male and female tourists aged 41 to 60 were the most active age group (55.2%). Within that group, women accounted for 56.8% of all female tourists and men for 53.3% of all male tourists traveling outside of Europe. The second most active group were tourists over 60 (22.5%) followed by 26 to 40 year olds (17.2%) with tourists below 26 constituting the least active segment (5.2%).

A breakdown by gender and age shows that women achieved the majority in the youngest group of persons below 26 (134 women per 100 men). Women maintained that lead in two of the other age groups of 21 to

40 (112/100) and 41 to 60 (122/100). However, the ratio was reversed among tourists aged over 60 with male tourists outnumbering females at the rate of 96 women to 100 men.

Table 1: Gender breakdown by age group among tourists surveyed in 1998-2002

Age group (years of age)	Women		Men	
	Number	%	Number	%
up to 26	91	5.6	68	4.7
26-40	279	17.0	248	17.3
41-60	929	56.8	762	53.3
over 60	337	20.6	352	24.6
Total	1636	53.4	1430	46.6

Studies show that the breakdown of the surveyed tourists by age and gender did not reflect the demographics in Poland at large between 1998 and 2002. While women held sway in two of the youngest tourist age groups, they were in the minority among the total population of Poland as men outnumbered them in the other age groups. While women were in the majority among both tourists and the overall population of Poland in the 41 to 60 year group, women's domination among tourists was greater. The majority of tourists aged over 60 were male while the proportions in this age group were reversed in the population of Poland at large.

Elderly men are more mobile and more self-reliant than women. The ratio of fully capable men above 60 years of age is twice that of women in the same age group (Balicka-Kozłowska, 1981: 81).

Consequently, elderly women find it harder than elderly men to go on long journeys, which involve physical exertion. Despite such impediments and restrictions, the proportion of elderly people over 60 who chose to travel outside of Europe was quite substantial.

A study of traveler age distribution in the following years disclosed a different picture (Table 2). With the exception of the oldest age group of tourists over 60, tourists in all age groups increased in numbers.

Tables 3 and 4 below illustrate the demographics of tourists who traveled to non-European destinations during the 1998-2002 and 2003-2007 periods.

Table 2: Gender breakdown by age group among tourists surveyed in 2003-2007

Age group (years of age)	Women		Men	
	Number	%	Number	%
up to 26	320	7.6	253	7.1
26-40	744	17.7	580	16.1
41-60	2473	58.8	2082	58.1
Over 60	671	15.9	670	18.1
Total	4208	54.0	3585	46.00

The rise amounted to 1.7% in the up-to-26 group, 0.3% among the 26 to 40 year olds and 3.2% among the 41 to 60 year olds. Unfortunately, the oldest age group posted a relatively sharp decline in tourist activity of as much as 5.3%. The drop came in the wake of a rise in the cost of living in Poland and many elderly Poles losing some or all of their supplementary income without any offsetting increase in their retirement benefits. Many senior citizens found such tours to be a luxury beyond their means.

Female domination continued in the years 2003-2007. During that period, women accounted for 54.0% of all participants in outbound sightseeing tours beyond Europe, strengthening their sway compared to the preceding period. Much as in the preceding years, women outnumbered men in the youngest age group of under 26 year olds (126 women to 100 men). The trend was maintained in the 21 to 40 age group (128/100) as well as among the tourists aged 41 to 60 (119/100). The pattern resulted from an increase in the urban populations of young well-educated high-income women with a high self-esteem, unhindered by family obligations and eager for new interesting experiences. A certain significance needs to be attributed to behaviors prevalent in this age group such as the willingness to emulate others and make oneself appear to be more interesting in the process.

Table 3: Age breakdown among participants in non-European tours in 1998-2003

		up to 26 yrs.	26-40 yrs.	41-60 yrs.	over 60 yrs.	
AFR	W	0.0%	14.1%	27.2%	6.4%	100%
	M	2.1%	14.0%	22.8%	13.4%	
ANT	W	0.0%	0.0%	5.6%	11.1%	100%
	M	11.1%	5.6%	33.3%	33.3%	
ASI	W	0.3%	12.9%	32.2%	9.3%	100%
	M	0.3%	10.2%	23.2%	11.6%	
ATW	W	0.4%	5.1%	26.5%	15.0%	100%
	M	0.4%	6.9%	27.3%	18.4%	
AUS	W	0.5%	7.8%	30.0%	13.9%	100%
	M	1.7%	10.6%	23.3%	12.2%	
MEA	W	1.3%	9.0%	32.9%	18.0%	100%
	M	0.8%	7.4%	19.0%	17.6%	
NAM	W	3.3%	5.4%	32.0%	11.7%	100%
	M	1.8%	7.4%	24.5%	13.8%	
SAM	W	1.7%	11.8%	30.0%	8.5%	100%
	M	1.2%	7.5%	28.0%	8.8%	

On the other hand, the women-to-men ratio among tourists. aged above 60 rose from the preceding years to more than one (with 100.2 women for every 100 men), which made women account for half of all tourists in this

age group. This suggests that women in this age group explored the world more actively whenever they could afford it

Table 4: Age breakdown among participants in non-European tours in 2003-2007

		up to 26 yrs.	26-40 yrs.	41-60 yrs.	over 60 yrs.	
AFR	W	7.8%	5.4%	32.8%	8.6%	100%
	M	4.2%	5.1%	27.7%	8.6%	
ANT	W	0.0%	10.7%	17.9%	10.7%	100%
	M	3.6%	3.6%	42.9%	10.7%	
ASI	W	3.5%	11.6%	32.6%	8.8%	100%
	M	2.6%	7.9%	25.1%	8.0%	
ATW	W	4.8%	3.2%	29.0%	14.5%	100%
	M	0.0%	3.2%	25.8%	19.4%	
AUS	W	3.3%	7.8%	32.3%	8.2%	100%
	M	1.9%	7.8%	28.3%	10.3%	
MEA	W	2.2%	7.5%	32.1%	15.3%	100%
	M	1.9%	6.5%	21.8%	12.8%	
NAM	W	5.6%	6.7%	28.7%	10.1%	100%
	M	4.5%	5.8%	29.1%	9.5%	
SAM	W	3.5%	10.6%	31.9%	6.9%	100%
	M	3.7%	8.5%	27.2%	7.7%	

7. Conclusion

The above discussion suggests that:

- most destinations were dominated by persons aged 41 to 60 with women being in a rather significant majority over men. From 1998 to 2002, a staggering 18% of all travelers to the Middle East were women aged above 60. No other destination attracted representatives of this age group in such overwhelming proportions. This is due to the specific standing of Israel as a tourist destination as most travelers supposedly go there as pilgrims to the Holy Land. Such journeys are particularly important for elderly people many of whom see them as “the trips of their lives”.

- the only exception during the 1998-2002 period was Antarctica which was overwhelmingly selected by men above 41. This was most likely due to the necessity to make a long strenuous sea journey from Ushuaia, Chile to Antarctica. The tour participants needed to be in good physical condition as they were likely to succumb to sea sickness during their travel across the stormy ocean and had to brave freezing temperatures which require physical endurance. Nevertheless, the number of women who chose this destination rose during the 2002-2007 period, in particular among the 26-40 age group.

- under-26-year-olds accounted for only a small percentage of participants in all tours between 1998 and 2002. Their destinations were practically limited to the Middle East, with its religious connotations, and to North America which was most likely agreed to by parents willing to have their children realize their dream of visiting the United States. Some of these youngest tourists (virtually all boys) also selected Africa and South and Central Americas. The latter segment, however, amounted to a very small proportion of the total participants (below 2%). The percentage of the youngest tourists rose in the following years, particularly among those traveling to Africa (up by 9.9%), North America (5.0%) and South and Central Americas (4.3%).

- during the 2003-2007 period, the share of the oldest travelers declined for every destination (with the exception of women visiting Africa, whose share rose by 2.2%), and men circling the globe (up by 1.0%).

- the proportions of persons aged 27 to 40 declined for nearly all destinations with the exception of Antarctica and North America where the number of women rose on the preceding study period (up by 10.7% and 1.3% respectively) and men traveling to South America (up by 1.0%). The age of 30 to 40 is the time when especially women, but also men, start their families and reach an intensity peak in their professional work. Having little children at home and being limited in one's leaves of absence keeps people of that age from embarking on journeys outside of Europe, which tend to last 2 to 3 weeks.

- the share of both men and women in the 41 to 60 age group increased by 2-3% across nearly all destinations. Only North America and the Middle East were visited by fewer women during the 2002-2007 period than between 1998 and 2002 (down by 2.3% and 0.8% respectively) while slightly fewer men chose to see Central and South America (down by 0.8%) or travel around the world (down by 1,5%).

- the increase in the number of participants in non-European tours among the youngest tourist group aged below 26 years and tourists aged 41 to 60 also results from changes in family travel trends. A declining number of tourists in these age groups choose remote destinations during the holiday season when intending to spend it with either their children or their parents.

- the oldest tourists (above 60) accounted for the greatest proportion of those visiting North America, Australia and Oceania and selecting tours around the world. Tours to the "civilized world" offer the sense of psychological security that elderly people much need. This conclusion is

supported by the age and gender distributions among tourists visiting Africa,

South America and Asia. Considerably more younger tourists aged 27 to 40 than those above 60 selected such destinations. The former were supposedly most inclined to seek adventures and venture off the beaten track.

In addition to age and gender, today's global tourist trends are influenced by social and economic conditions. These two classes of factors are posed to become the dominant forces shaping Poland's tourist traffic to non-European destinations for years to come.

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