

# Research on the Construction of Private Brands of Online Retail Enterprises

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Manuscript received June 24, 2024; revised July 24, 2024; accepted August 2, 2024; published August 16, 2024.

**Abstract**—Private label, in a broad sense, refers to the brand created and used by wholesalers or retailers themselves to distinguish goods or services from other brands. This paper focuses on the development of private labels by online retailers, studying their history and future direction. It provides a brief overview of online retail private labels' current status, identifies online retailers' challenges, and conducts a case analysis using Jingdong Jingzao as a representative example. Finally, the paper proposes countermeasures and suggestions for the development of online retail private labels, including strategic brand development, quality control enhancement, and scientific marketing strategies.

**Keywords**—online retailers, private brand, brand building

## I. INTRODUCTION

With the transformation and development of China's economy, the competition in the retail market is becoming more and more fierce. In order to enhance the overall competitiveness of enterprises, increase profits, and improve customer loyalty and satisfaction, more retailers are adopting private brand development strategies. Early online retailers attracted a large number of new users with lower prices compared to brick-and-mortar stores. However, as the online retail sector has matured and consumer groups on platforms have become saturated, the acquisition of new users has experienced a significant decline. Especially in recent years, the endless shopping festivals and preferential subsidies have gradually made consumers feel tired, and the simplistic price competition model is no longer as effective for online retail companies. On the other hand, online retail breaks the restrictions of time and space, consumers can buy goods from all over the world at anytime and anywhere, and it is easy to compare and buy similar goods of different brands, rather than sticking to a specific retailer. At the same time, the similar product push mechanism unique to online retail provides convenience for consumers to shop around. This means that compared with traditional retailers, online retailers are more substitutable and have lower consumer stickiness. Therefore, retailers are shifting their focus towards enhancing brand competitiveness to attract new consumers and improve customer loyalty. At present, the private brand market is experiencing rapid growth, and the number of private brand items from retailers nationwide has shown a continuous and substantial growth trend in the past 3 years. In addition, according to relevant research data, consumers' trust and acceptance of private brands are also on the rise, with consumer's awareness of private brands increasing from 74% in 2019 to 92% in 2021.

Therefore, studying the development model that is suitable for constructing private brands for online retail enterprises in China is crucial. This research can help address the

challenges related to private brand construction for online retail enterprises in China and facilitate the transformation and development of the online retail sector in the country.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Research Status of Foreign Countries

Private brands originated in the United Kingdom, and there has been relatively more foreign research on private brands. However, the development of private brands for online retailers is relatively new, with most existing research still primarily focused on private brands of traditional retailers. Johan (2007) points out the "umbrella effect" that retailers can obtain through their own brands, if the development of their own brands for a particular category is successful, retailers can use that category as the basis for the development of other more relevant product categories. This will help reduce the cost of unit development and sales of private brands and also promote the overall sales profit of the brand. Kilic (2011) investigated retailers' propensity and expectations for private label products and showed that the level of activity, number, and size of branches of retailers had an impact on the objectives of private label product development. In terms of influencing factors, Adi (2017) found that price perception, quality perception, familiarity, and other factors significantly affect the purchase intention of private-label products through probability sampling. Jel (2018) found through blind product testing that consumers have high expectations of the quality of their own brands relative to national brands, and that appropriate intervention information helps to increase consumers' preference for their own brands, but the memory of this information slowly declines over time. In terms of pricing strategies, the private brand positioning of online retailers and the private brand positioning of traditional retailers tend to be low-price positioning, using low prices to open up the market. Hoch and Banerj (1993) emphasize that retailers offering relatively low-priced, high-quality goods increase the probability of consumer choice. However, in recent years, there has been a new view on the pricing of private brands, and many scholars believe that private brands can implement high pricing strategies. Verhoef *et al.* (2002) argue that retailers can set higher prices for high-quality, high-level consumer goods to compete with other products at the same level.

### B. Research Status in China

The development of domestic private brands in China has been relatively late, but under the influence of the Internet economy, the development of the private brands of Chinese retailers is closely related to the Internet economy. Compared to traditional retailers, online retailers, influenced by the

Internet economy, have the advantage of flexibility in terms of space and inventory turnover, making it easier to balance the scheduling and expansion of private-label goods. However, despite these advantages, online retailers still contend with challenges such as manufacturer competition, retailer brand image, consumer perceived value, and other new challenges.

First of all, although online retailers have gotten rid of the restrictions of offline product layout, online layout also affects consumers' willingness to buy their brands. Liu (2016) takes Jingdong Mall as an example for analysis and finds that the first page of the web page is often the first choice for retailers to launch their brand products. In order to make a direct comparison with consumers, the nearby location of similar brands of manufacturers is also a better location to put their own brand information. Sun and Wu (2018) believe that this is because consumers spend less time browsing online commodity information than in physical stores, and the relative purpose is not strong. Consumers' limited information acceptance and processing ability make consumers' viewing time for all products decrease. Secondly, Yu and Xia (2014), model shows that online reviews are also a non-negligible factor that affects consumers' online purchases of their brands. Compared with traditional consumption, online reviews are the most authentic content that concentrates on past consumer satisfaction and product feedback, so they are a powerful way for consumers to obtain supplementary product information. At present, online retailers tend to choose products with low brand awareness, large sales volume and high purchase frequency, low price level and low technical threshold, and high degree of preservation and quality requirements when choosing their brand product categories. But on this basis, online retailers began to expand to electronic technology products and personalized customized products. Their product research and development departments are relatively large, more professional, and have a greater say in product development and production. Zhang (2018) believes that this mainly depends on the innovative development thinking and data information processing capabilities given to retail enterprises in the Internet era. At the same time, this is also the result of the impact on target customers. In the customer composition of e-commerce, young and middle-aged consumers generally account for more than 70%. This group of people not only pays attention to price but also pays attention to innovation and fashion.

### *C. Review*

To sum up, compared with the private brand construction of offline retailers, which has been widely discussed, the private brand construction of online retailers has not received enough attention from scholars at home and abroad. However, online retail has become an integral part of the development of China's retail industry, online retailers are booming, and even offline retailers have opened up online sales channels. Therefore, no matter from the theoretical or practical needs, we urgently need to carry out a more focused and targeted analysis of online retailers' private brand construction, analyze the differences between it and traditional retailers' private brand construction, and explore the characteristics of its private brand construction.

## III. THE RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRIVATE BRAND OF ONLINE RETAIL ENTERPRISES RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### *A. The Rise of Private Brands of Online Retail Enterprises*

In the 1990s, China's e-commerce enterprises entered the embryonic stage. In 2005, the total number of domestic Internet users exceeded 0.1 billion, and the outbreak of domestic and foreign demand made the large and small e-commerce platforms show a blowout growth. In order to rob users and obtain traffic dividends, enterprises have begun to burn money mode. After the Thousand Regiment War, China's e-commerce enterprises gradually formed an oligopoly pattern, the flow dividend began to decrease, and the platforms began to focus on the development of market segments. In 2019, the e-commerce industry opened the first year of live broadcasting. Low prices and large traffic have become a thing of the past. Nowadays, e-commerce enterprises, large and small, pay more attention to the construction of their own e-commerce brands. Brand stories, brand cost performance, and brand development have become the common concerns of merchants and consumers.

However, different from the development of traditional retailers, although the private brands of online retailers in China started late, they often started in the stage of imitation and began to move towards the stage of independent innovation and high-cost performance. In recent years, private brands have developed rapidly in the field of e-commerce. Not only large platforms such as Taobao and Jingdong have begun to develop their own private brands, but some small and medium-sized businesses have also begun to pay attention to their own private brand construction. Its areas cover food, clothing, daily necessities, fresh and other fields.

### *B. Development Status of Private Brands of Online Retail Enterprises in China*

#### *1) The growth rate of online retail is slowing down and the development is stable*

In 2023, China's total online retail sales reached 15426.42 billion yuan, up 11.9 percent from 2022. Compared to online retail growth of 11% in 2023, 4% in 2022, 14.05 in 2021. This means that in recent years, the popularity of online shopping has been effective and has become the norm of life for most families. At the same time, it also means that the related logistics and distribution facilities, after-sales service, and online rights protection systems that have been criticized and worried by consumers are also constantly improving and perfecting. The slowdown of online retail growth means that the development of China's online retail industry has entered a period of relatively stable development. During this period, the market structure was basically stable, and the pattern of large platform monopoly was difficult to break. At the same time, from the demand side, online consumers are stable, the explosive growth of users in the past no longer exists, consumers' preferences for goods have changed, and cost-effective and innovative goods are more likely to be chosen by consumers.

#### *2) The private brand market of online retail enterprises is developing rapidly*

In the 1980s, international retail giants entered the Chinese market, and the first year of China's own brands began. In

2013, to promote the development of private brands in China and the Asia-Pacific region, the China Private Brand Professional Committee was established. In 2019, the domestic private brand market share will be 1%, but the overall private brand market size will break a trillion. The acceptance of domestic consumers for their own brands is also increasing, and more and more consumers are willing to try their own brands. According to Damman International, average monthly consumer household private label spending increased by nearly 40% in 2020 compared to 2017.

In the early days of the Chinese market, private brands were dominated by large-scale supermarkets, and their development was slow; but until recent years, with the stable development of the Internet economy and the vigorous development of new retail, private brands began to develop greatly. Online private label sales reached \$11.27 billion in 2020, while online private label sales in 2019 were only \$5.91 billion, an 88% growth rate demonstrating the vitality of the online private label market. Not only are a series of supermarkets such as China Resources Vanguard, RT-Mart, and Yonghui taking advantage of the new retail model, combining online and offline to go deep into the private brand market; moreover, a series of enterprises such as Xiaomi and Netease are also laying out their own private brand market. Jingdong, Box Horse Fresh, and Daily Youxian are also taking the lead in using their platform advantages to snatch market users. The shopping trend of consumers seeking cost-effective makes retailers tend to choose high-value private brands in order to gain more profits and win greater growth potential. At the same time, private brands can establish a trust relationship with consumers through the image of related retailers, enhance user stickiness through quality commitment, marketing and other forms, and obtain more loyal users. Figures and tables should be inserted in the main text in continuous order and should be called out, e.g.

*3) The growth rate of online retail is slowing down and the development is stable*

In recent years, the online retail industry has developed rapidly, especially the e-commerce live broadcast industry has been amazing development. The mode of live delivery brings the private brands of a series of small and medium-sized online retail enterprises to consumers. Whether it is a platform anchor or a personal anchor of an online retail enterprise, it provides a good window for promoting self-brand. In addition, the short video era not only allows users to have more entertainment but also allows businesses to have more innovative marketing methods. Short video has the characteristics of short time, changeable content, and rich form, which is suitable for businesses to tell brand stories and shape brand culture. At the same time, the short-sighted frequency has unique characteristics of easy brainwashing, easy to addictive, conducive to consumers to promote their private brands, and mining potential users.

#### IV. PROBLEMS EXISTING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRIVATE BRANDS OF ONLINE RETAIL ENTERPRISES

##### *A. Network Retail Enterprises' Private Brand Development Lack Experience*

The overall characteristics of China's online retailers are

small scale, fewer development years, and more new brands. In recent years, China's online retailers have become a blowout growth, and the low threshold of online retail has allowed many small and medium-sized enterprises to survive and develop. However, these small and medium-sized enterprises are generally small in scale, have less capital, and have less development experience. The development of these enterprises is mainly based on imitation, lacking a complete brand incubation system. Only 27% of retailers have more than 6 years of experience in the field of private brands, and 49% of retailers have less than 3 years of business experience.

Secondly, the development time of China's overall private brand is short, especially since the private brand of online retailers lacks mature development experience. The development of private brands of many enterprises is still in the initial stage, even the theoretical stage, and the future planning and development of the brand are not clear. At the same time, in the building of corporate brand culture, there is also a lack of innovation and characteristics. Most of them are based on imitation and following the trend, lacking real corporate and brand connotations, and still focusing on chasing traffic.

##### *B. Network Retail Enterprise's Private Brand Management Needs to Be Improved*

First of all, in terms of quality management, the products of online retailers generally have the problem of uneven product quality or the situation of wrong goods. On the one hand, this is because online retailers have loopholes in brand quality management. On the other hand, it is also because the cooperation time between online retailers suppliers, and manufacturers is relatively short, and there are often multiple suppliers. The lack of relatively unified supervision and management of different suppliers and different batches of goods has caused problems in the quality control of their brands, thus affecting customers' impressions of the entire brand. Secondly, in terms of employee management, online retailers have large employee mobility and weak employee cohesion. Both the education and publicity of the company are not high, resulting in low employee awareness of their brands, which results in the company as a whole. Lack of strong awareness of private brand development.

##### *C. The Cost of Marketing Publicity of Private Brand Goods of Network Retail Enterprises is Fuzzy*

Good brand marketing is also the key to building an enterprise's brand. In recent years, the development of large and small network platforms has become increasingly mature. A series of marketing and publicity methods, such as short video promotion, self-media blogger promotion, public number soft article promotion, live broadcast with goods, etc., have emerged one after another. The publicity road of private brands has become more diversified, but most of these methods lack clear cost and effect price. Recently, there have been several cases in which the anchor was asked to bring the goods at a high price but the goods were not collected, which deeply reflects the high degree of opacity in this market. The high uncertainty of network channel marketing publicity has far exceeded the uncertainty of traditional TV advertising and paper media publicity. Uncertainty and rising sunk costs have discouraged many small and medium-sized online retailers.

Even for many large online retailers, Internet operation promotion is still a new topic. Good own brand if the lack of proper marketing is also difficult to develop. The rising cost of brand marketing has also compressed the profit margin of private brands.

## V. CASE ANALYSIS

### A. The Overall Situation of the Development of Jingdong's Private Brand

Jingdong is one of the most successful online retailers in China. Since 2012, Jingdong has gradually tried to build its private brand. Through continuous exploration and adjustment of its private brand development strategy, Jingdong has gradually improved the overall layout of its private brand. At present, Jingdong has 8 own brands, including food, clothing, 3C electronic products, household, fresh, and other industries. (Table 1. for details) In terms of brand strategy, Jingdong implements a multi-brand model, that is, different commodity categories establish different private brands respectively, such as the eight-share time of main leisure food products, the initial love of mother and infant products industry, the INTERIGHT of clothing products, Jingdong Jingzao, which is mainly engaged in household products, etc. This is conducive to Jingdong to attract different consumers, emphasize brand characteristics, carry out brand professional development, and occupy more market segments.

Table 1. Overall situation of Jingdong's private brands

Private Brand Name	Main commodity category	Market Positioning
Eight enjoy time	Biscuits, canned and other leisure food	Healthy snacks for the office crowd
LATIT	Outdoor sports goods, travel bags and other products	High-quality professional, low price and affordable
First Love	Maternal and Infant Supplies	High-quality
Jia Bai (Tommy)	Home improvement supplies, household daily necessities and other daily necessities	High-quality, safety, design sense
INTERIGHT	Shirts and other casual clothing products	High-quality, mainly for mid-range consumers
JingXuan (dostyle upgrade brand)	Mobile phone accessories, small appliances, smart home and other products	High quality, innovative intelligent technology products
Jing Mi	Fresh products such as fruits and vegetables and meat	Safe and high-quality fresh products
Jingdong Jingzao	Home furnishings, household appliances, and other daily necessities	Provide high-quality products of the whole category

Among the many brands developed by Jingdong, Jingdong Jingzao has developed rapidly and has become an outstanding representative of Jingdong's private brands. Jingdong Jingzao is Jingdong's private brand launched in 2018. Jingdong Jingzao mainly focuses on household goods,

gradually covering beauty clothing, daily necessities, travel sports products, and other categories, and gradually developing to the whole category model. Four hours before the opening of the Double 11 in 2021, the total turnover of Jingdong Jingzao increased by 279 compared to last year, a significant growth rate, and in the second half of the year was successfully selected as KPMG's top 50 new national brands. The following is a specific analysis of the development strategy of online retail private brands, taking Jingdong Jingzao as an example.

### B. The Brand Development Strategy of Jingdong Jingzao

#### 1) Market positioning

Jingdong Jingzao will target customer groups in the family as a unit of consumer groups. At present, there are a total of 14 product categories on the official website made in Jingdong. Among them, 6 categories of home textiles, furniture and building materials, kitchen and water utensils, household appliances, personal care, and household goods are mostly family scenes in the consumption scenes. Most of the consumer groups consume these products on a family basis. At the same time, as the target customer group of Jingdong Jingzao, there are also some digital product enthusiasts. Compared to other Jingdong's private brands, Jingdong-choose, focuses on intelligent technology products and their accessories, while Jingdong Jingzao focuses more on product accessories and small electronic products such as digital cameras.

#### 2) Product naming strategy

Jingdong for its own brand "Jingdong Jingzao" naming, takes a clever pun. "Jingdong Jingzao" not only implies Jingdong manufacturing but also highlights the brand's concept of "meticulous manufacturing". The product concept made by its own brand Jingdong Jingzao is "quality of mass goods, popularization of high-end goods", to ensure product quality and provide consumers with high-quality and low-cost daily necessities.

The name of its own brand "Jingdong Jingzao" also has a relatively large number of Jingdong attributes. These names are closely related to Jingdong's private brand strategy. Under the multi-brand model, the naming of different private brands by online retailers tends to intentionally reduce the correlation between brands, especially the naming of private brands in different industry categories. But Jingdong for its private brand naming has been divided into two categories. One is the naming mode of self-owned brands with obvious industry attributes such as Ba Xiang, Chu Ran Ai, and Jia Bai. These brand names are completely separated from Jingdong's main body and have little correlation with each other. The other is the naming mode of self-owned brands such as Jingdong Selection, Jingdong Jingzao, and Jingdong-choose. These brand names have strong Jingdong attributes and belong to the "Jingdong" series, the association between the brands is strong. (See Table 1 for details)

The naming pattern of "Jingdong Jingzao" belongs to the latter. This is because its own-brand products are mainly household goods for daily life, and gradually develop into clothing, luggage, and digital products. It is an own-brand built to provide all-category products, with more emphasis on the breadth of market coverage, which is different from

brands such as Churan Love and Jiabai, which emphasize the deepening of a single market segment. Jingdong Jingzao is a high-quality and high-quality development of Jingdong as the main body of online retailers in the field of all categories of retail. A higher associative nature is conducive to faster entry into the market, and the consumer reputation brought by Jingdong itself is used to improve the acceptance speed of consumers for these self-owned brands, thus promoting the development of the self-owned brand.

### *3) Product pricing strategy*

Product price is an important factor affecting product sales and an important part of the development of private brands. Jingdong Jingzao adopts a low-price model. Under the condition that the quality is roughly the same, the price of goods made in Jingdong Jingzao is generally 10%–30% lower than that of ordinary retailers. This is because the retailer's own brand itself has certain advantages, reducing the buying link from the manufacturer to the retailer. At the same time, as the private brand of online retailer Jingdong, Jingdong Jingzao can rely on the Jingdong platform to reduce certain platform costs, and Jingdong Logistics can also reduce costs in the circulation and transportation links. This is the unique advantage of Jingdong Jingzao as an online retailer's brand compared to the traditional retailer's own brand, and it is also the reason why Jingdong Jingzao can carry out a low-price strategy at a lower price.

### *4) Marketing strategy*

In terms of product marketing, Jingdong Jingzao adheres to the concept of high quality and low price and mainly attracts consumers through low-price promotion mode. 618 shopping festivals, New Year's Day, and price promotions such as coupons and combination discounts. At the same time, Jingdong Jingzao also pays attention to the improvement of its own product quality. At present, most of the products made in Jingdong Jingzao imitate well-known brands, and their own characteristics are relatively not very distinct. However, Jingdong Jingzao chose senior factories and invested professional teams in research and development to strictly control product quality.

Secondly, different from the traditional retailer's own brand, the construction of the sales website is an important way to promote the online retailer's own brand. Jingdong Jingzao not only has its own flagship store on the Jingdong platform but also has its own independent sales website. Multiple sales portals are conducive to the brand to attract as many consumers as possible and are conducive to converting users of the Jingdong platform into their brand traffic. The display interface of Jingdong Jingzao products adopts a unified management layout, and the product display interface is simple and efficient, so that product information can be clearly displayed in front of consumers. In addition, Jingdong Jingzao pays attention to the management of online product evaluation. The favorable evaluation rate of all kinds of products is controlled above 95%, and the favorable evaluation rate of many products is controlled at 99%, which is conducive to consumers getting more positive feedback when browsing commodities, thus increasing the possibility of purchasing commodities.

In addition, Jingdong Jingzao also actively uses the live broadcast publicity mode to conduct more comprehensive

product publicity and promotion through live broadcast interaction to attract potential consumers. However, compared to relying on the publicity of third-party anchors, Jingdong Jingzao chose to build its own live broadcast room and cultivate its own professional anchors. While having stronger professionalism, it also has a stronger understanding of the brand. This kind of live broadcast publicity method is also conducive to Jingdong Jingzao to cultivate its loyal customers and form a brand fan effect.

## VI. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the above analysis of the development status and problems of online retail private brands, combined with the successful experience of the development of "Jingdong Jingzao", the following countermeasures and suggestions are put forward for the development of online retail private brands:

### *A. Scientific Formulation of Overall Brand Development Strategy*

Like traditional retailers, online retailers mostly choose between a multi-brand strategy and a single-brand strategy when developing their own brands. Single brand strategy refers to the strategy of using the same brand for all products. This strategy is conducive to expanding the market momentum and establishing the brand's professional image. However, the inherent impression of the brand may also hinder the further expansion of the brand, and the products of a single brand strategy are also prone to vicious brand chain reactions. The multi-brand strategy refers to the enterprise its products using different brands to distinguish, this strategy is conducive to market segmentation, improves the market share of enterprises, and reduces enterprise risk, but the multi-brand strategy will increase brand costs, improve brand management risk, and new brands into the consumer market will be more difficult in the early stage. Therefore, online retailers should reasonably analyze their own enterprise size, product types, capital budget, and other factors to make brand strategy choices. When the scale of the enterprise is small, the product type is single or the correlation is strong, the choice of a single brand strategy is more conducive to the enterprise to open the market and promote the development of its own brand. When the enterprise scale is large, the capital budget is sufficient, and the ability to resist risks is strong, it can develop a multi-brand strategy and enter different industries to develop its own brand to occupy more market segments. Of course, online retailers should also adjust their brand development strategies appropriately according to the different development stages of their own brands, and combine the development strategies of online retailers to comprehensively use single-brand strategies and multi-brand strategies to promote their own brands. Healthy and sustainable development.

### *B. Strengthen the Quality Control of Online Retailers' Own-brand*

Brand quality is a decisive factor in the long run that retailers' own brands can go. First of all, retailers should start from the source of production to ensure brand quality. Both their own factories and manufacturer partners should be fully investigated, and carefully screened, and choose reputable

and quality-assured factories to produce products. Second, online retailers should improve the quality supervision system, and efficient and comprehensive quality supervision and management. For low-quality products to achieve timely discovery, timely elimination and learn from experience, and constantly improve production, improve product quality. Third, online retailers should listen carefully to after-sales feedback, according to consumer market feedback, with consumer demand as the core, and constantly adjust, update, and improve product quality to improve consumer satisfaction.

### C. Carry out the Scientific Marketing of the Network Retailer's Own Brand

Publicity and marketing are important steps in the construction of its own brand. Scientific and efficient publicity and marketing of its own brand can make its own brand quickly enter the market and enhance its popularity. First of all, online retail enterprises should choose targeted brand marketing strategies based on product strategies and target consumer groups, and carry out targeted and purposeful product promotion and marketing, such as free application for loyal users and publicity on the home page of the store's official website. Secondly, self-owned brand marketing should choose appropriate channels, choose short video publicity, self-media user evaluation, anchor carrying goods, and other methods according to its own operating conditions and marketing budget, and spread rapidly through microblog, tremolo, station B, Little Red book and other methods to attract fan groups, and finally complete the work of realizing traffic. At the same time, in the brand marketing publicity should be based on brand positioning, the target consumer's consumption tendency, choose the focus of publicity for reasonable publicity. For low-end goods, it focuses on highlighting its price advantage and cost-effective advantage; for high-end goods, it focuses on highlighting its brand culture, brand design, and brand innovation. Finally, online retail enterprises should pay attention to the unity of all channels, multi-channel, multi-platform cooperation, and publicity. Online retail companies often have a layout on multiple platforms. Therefore, online retailers should be unified and consistent across platforms when promoting their brands, and promote them according to the characteristics of users on each platform.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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