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PAMUN XVII RESEARCH REPORT—(MEASURES TO ENSURE ENVIRONMENTALLY SAFE TOURISM)

Introduction of Topic

Tourism takes shape in two forms: natural and cultural. The natural side of tourism was explored by the conservationist Teddy Roosevelt and John Muir as they established national parks throughout the U.S. and recognizing the importance of the conservation or preservation of nature. For other cultural tourism destinations, organizations like the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognizes cultural heritage through their revered World Heritage Sites. It seems that alongside the dawn of the modern era, a never before seen sense of globalism and connectivity flourishes the industry of tourism and progresses our society and economy. As one of the world's fastest growing markets, the United Nations World Trading Organization forecasts that by 2030, international tourist arrivals will reach 1.8 billion. This large growth in the sector can potentially bring economic booms that make up large portions of countries GDP. In thinking about the future, the tourism industry has a high potential for the progress of humanity. However, it seems that at the moment, trends in tourism point to a more negative outcome.

Environmental issues are a large obstacle in our path to a large tourism industry. The sector has become subject to unsustainable practices and risks collapse if trends continue. Many factors like overuse, natural erosion, poor regulation contribute to tourist destinations being polluted and losing their attractiveness to visitors. Many destinations around the world have been brought to the brink of destruction because of irresponsible and unsustainable tourism.

The world has taken notice of this problem and made efforts to combat this issue. Organizations like the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) closely monitor and recommends solutions in nations across the globe. Businesses are starting to take notice of their carbon footprint and implements eco-friendly policies. However, work is still needed to be done. No real goals have been set by international fora specifically for sustainable tourism and thus we cannot measure how far we have progressed. After a couple of years of trying to deal with this issue, we should now analyze and review our efforts, and look towards better solutions for a better future.

Definition of Key Terms

Sustainable development

As defined in the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, sustainable development is “a process to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Ecotourism

According to The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) in 2015, Ecotourism is defined as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education”.

Background Information

Tourism and Environmental Sustainability

Tourism is regarded by the UNWTO as one of the world's largest industries and must be promoted for its social and economic benefits for all participants. Tourism is intrinsically and uniquely related to sustainable development because of its nature as a sector based on two factors. Firstly, tourism requires interaction between visitors, environments, local communities, and the government. Second, tourism educates visitors about environmental issues and diversity amongst countries and cultures. These two points are combined to make a statement that tourism is dependent on the destination having a clean environment in order to provide a good experience to all partakers. Now depending on how tourism is executed may change its fate as a benefit or detriment to social economics.

Positives brought by Tourism

The UNWTO estimates that by direct, indirect, or induced manners, tourism contributes to 10% of the world GDP, 1/10 Jobs, 1.5 Trillion USD in exports, 7% of the world's exports, and 30% of service exports. In more detail, the industry provides entrepreneurial opportunities for local communities investing in destinations for a more global community. It brings awareness and support for conservation in local communities for natural and cultural resources. Lastly it brings a sense of globalism, understanding, and peace among diverse cultures

Negatives brought by Tourism

Of course, like any industry, the tourism industry can be fragile and sensitive to environmental and social changes. If tourism is not implemented efficiently, socio-economic difficulties can arise like the overuse and eventual degradation of an ecosystem, corporate invasion on culturally important destinations, competition between resources, and pollution of the global ecosystem. Recognizing the two previously mentioned pillars, the lack of a clean environment will lead to the visitors, environments, local communities, and the government to be negatively impacted as tourism falls more unstable as a source of income. An example would be the Koh Tachai Island

in Thailand. Thailand's popular tourism of beaches and wildlife has attracted 30 million foreigners in 2015 and garners 10% of the nation's GDP. However, due to overcrowding, overuse, and other unsustainable tourism of the touristic destinations, islands like Koh Tachai has suffered the bleaching of corals and damages to the marine ecosystem. Thanks to these unsustainable methods, the destination has been brought the brink of destruction and have been shut down by the Thai government to rehabilitate the remains of that ecosystem.

Why Tourism is Becoming more Unsustainable

As a result of unsustainable tourism, negative impacts are plentiful and harm our environment on multiple facets. Modern tourism's devolution to decreasing sustainability can be explained in 6 points:

Commodification of Tourism

As industrial tourism grows entrepreneurial opportunities, systems of mass production like homogenization, standardization, and automation are implemented into the system. This commodification of tourism poses a threat because it can prioritize the economic developments over conservational benefits. Thus, ecotourism becomes subject to non-sustainable means of production to the local communities of destinations.

Lack of Visitor Management Tourism

To maintain a destination's environmental vitality, the site must manage their visitors' behavior. This is to ensure visitors are following smart travel ethics that preserve the environmental aspect of the destination. Many sites lack an efficient visitor management system and or enforcement of the management. An example can be seen at the pyramids of Giza, which over time has experienced graffiti, urination, climbing, litter, and the stealing of the stones by visitors.

Increasing Demand Brings Unsustainable Methods

Touristic products can find difficulties accommodating to an expanding markets' demands and have to resort to unsustainable methods. This issue is pertinent in many developing nations where local resources are unstable, infrastructure like sewage and transport are lacking, and a general shortage of energy, water, and food. The widening gap between supply and demand is sometimes intensified by the visitors' and industries' growing consumption of resources. In the Islands of Hawaii, the tourism sector is estimated to account for as much as 21.7% of total energy consumption, 44.7% of the island-wide water consumption, and 10.7% of the island-wide waste generation.

Transportation's role in Tourism

Possible new methods that allow a tourist to participate in cheaper forms of transportation and activities brings popularity to destinations that sacrifice sustainability for a cheaper service and pressures sustainable destinations to follow suit. This possibility is on top of the fact that 90% of all anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, the pollution responsible for climate change, from the tourism sector is due to transportation. This calls for an improved efficiency and effectiveness of local transport.

Driving Local Communities Out

The current methods of introducing mass tourism hotspots surge prices of food, water, housing, and infrastructure which can environmentally degrade the site. This sometimes causes local communities, who could be more environmentally concerned than the private sector, to be driven out. Although this is less related to environmental impacts and more socio-economic impacts, as already stated, tourism is a balance of socio-economic principles and if one branch is impacted, the other branches, environment included, will be affected as well.

Identifying Eco-friendly Tourism

When it comes to discussing environmental issues, the tourism industry as a whole is not uniform in their opinions on waste, carbon, water scarcity, and other environmental issues. In addition, a problem can be found in the “Green washing of tourism. Many companies claim environmental sustainability, but the consumer has no way of proving that either because of a lack of a system that sets standards for sustainability, or a company that is just lying about their eco-friendliness. The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) in Britain reported an increase in complaints about environmental claims from 117 in 2006 to 561 a year later, which found many exaggerated or misleading claims. This is all rooted back to the commodification of tourism and the prioritization of economic development over environmental development.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

[UNWTO \(United Nations World Tourism Organization\)](#)

The United Nations World Trade Organization (UNWTO) is an agency that was formed in 1975 by the United Nations. The organization is tasked with promoting responsible, sustainable, and universally accessible tourism. The UNWTO has a membership of 156 states as of 2013. Some countries that are not member states include: United States, United Kingdom, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, and others.

[UNEP \(United Nations Environment Program\)](#)

The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), founded on 5 June 1972, is the UN's premier agency that deals with environmental policies and practices. They are responsible for all other branches of UN environmental programs.

CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity)

2003's Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), adopted by the Conference of Parties introduced developments and strategies for tourism development. A plan was devised and agreed upon that focused on data gathering, objective identification, legislation modifications, and possible environmental impact management. At the convention, guidelines on biodiversity and tourism development were devised. These guidelines are recommended to be integrated in national governments in regards to their plans for tourism development and biodiversity strategies.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization)

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is an agency of the UN that focuses on peace and security through education, science, and culture. They are relevant to tourism because of their creation and recognition of World Heritage Sites – UN sponsored tourist destinations that give a cultural and or natural experience.

Timeline of Events

| Date | Description of event |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1975 | United nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) founded |
| September 10 th 1987 | "Our Common Future" aka "Brundtland report" from the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development is written to discuss the environment and its development. |
| February 3 rd 1990 | The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) is founded |
| November 15 th 1990 | The first definition of Ecotourism by the International Ecotourism Society is established |
| August 2005 | The White Paper "Making Tourism More Sustainable – A Guide for Policy Makers" is written by the UNEP |
| 20 May 2016 | International Conference on Sustainable Tourism hosted in Valencia. |

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Resolution on the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, 20 December 2010 (**A/RES/65/148**)
- Resolution on the Promotion of ecotourism for poverty eradication and environment protection, 20 December 2010 (**A/RES/65/173**)
- Resolution on the Promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection, 19 December 2014 (**A/RES/69/233**)
- Resolution on the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, 2017, 9 February 2016 (**A/RES/70/193**)
- Convention on Biological Diversity signed, 5 June 1992

Main Issues

Differences in Interpretation of Ecotourism

Even though TIES defines Ecotourism as the “responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education”. Some institutions understand it simple as a branch of tourism that observes exotic natural environments and wildlife. This understanding of ecotourism does not regard sustainability and conservation in its principles. What we find is “eco-tourism” businesses seeking out remote places to commercialize without sustainable policies. For example, many safari businesses in Kenya and Tanzania label them as ecotourism and ecofriendly. However, trends show that lions are no longer hunting in the areas that tour jeeps are driving. This is because of the tour jeeps scaring off animals that the lion prey on, forcing the lions to find different hunting grounds. This small effect can have larger consequences on the food chain and biodiversity. The differences in these interpretations are a huge factor in the “greenwashing” problem of the tourism industry.

Negative Impacts of Ecotourism

Despite all the benefits from Ecotourism, it has its drawbacks. Many of the issues listed can be attributed to an overextension on the environmental benefits without regard to the economic and social

aspect of sustainability. Many ecotourism companies take up large portions of land. In Kenya, 70% of the total land is used for raising livestock but the rise of ecotourism has privatized this area and developed national parks or wildlife reserves that invades on indigenous peoples' lands. In the Situation of the Maasai Mara, ecotourism's safari destinations has seen overcrowding and low income. The local communities have not been incorporated in the industry and receive little benefit. This on top of the settlement of National Parks labeled as Ecotourism, they have been driven out of their traditional lands.

Figure 1.1: Relationship between the 12 aims and the pillars of sustainability

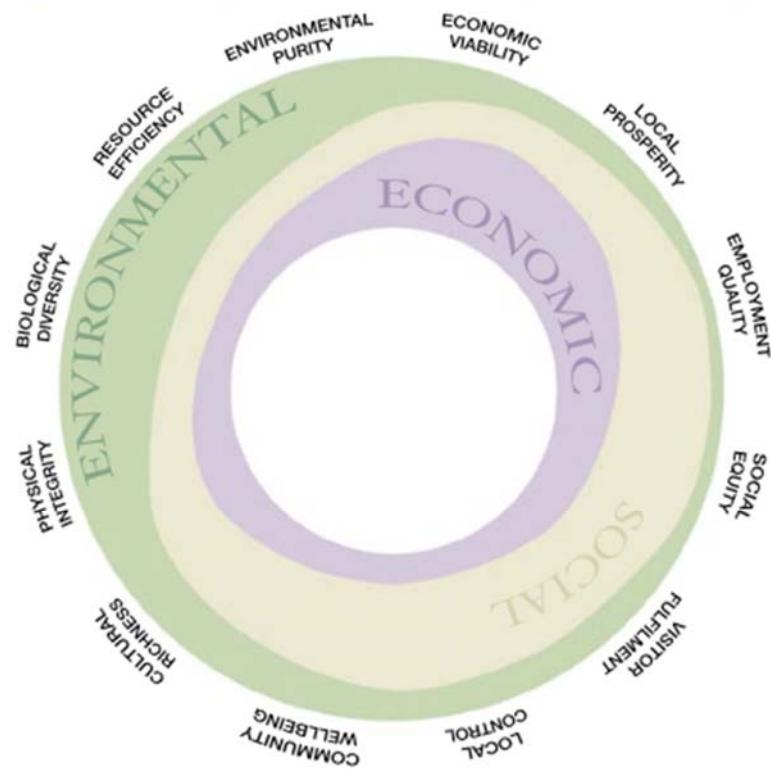


Figure 1.1 “Relationship between the 12 aims and pillars of sustainability. This picture depicts the twelve aspects that are of concern when dealing with sustainable tourism. It is displays to what extent these sectors affect the environmental, social, and economic divisions.

An overarching chart of issues that must be tackled can be seen in figure 1.1 above. Below are brief explanations on each of the pillars. Afterwards, the report then wishes to highlight 5 ideas from these pillars to address this topic.

1. Economic Viability: ensuring competition between tourism businesses to deliver economic development.
2. Local Prosperity: routing the economic benefits of tourism to the destination and its local population.

3. Employment Quality: reinforcing the quantity and quality of jobs in tourism. This means engaging the local population, promoting good wages, and denouncing discrimination in the work environment.
4. Social Equity: fairly distributing the economic and social benefits of tourism to a local population. This can mean developing income opportunities for disadvantaged people.
5. Visitor Fulfillment: providing a quality and authentic experience for tourists without discrimination.
6. Local Control: incorporating the local communities in planning and decision making of the development of tourism alongside stakeholders.
7. Community Wellbeing: preserving the local population's quality of resources, amenities, and social structures from social degradation or exploitation.
8. Cultural Richness: promoting the local culture through historic heritage, authenticity, and traditions.
9. Physical Integrity: enhancing the quality of the landscape and avoiding physical or visual degradation. The goal of this pillar is to maintain a physical attractiveness of the destination to appeal to visitors.
10. Biological Diversity: ensuring no harm done to natural areas, habitats, and wildlife.
11. Resource Efficiency: minimizing the use of non-renewable resources and overconsumption of resources by tourism facilities and services.
12. Environmental Purity: minimizing the pollution of air, water, land, and waste generation by the tourism industry.

Regulating Dynamic Growth and Resource Efficiency

Pressure from an increasingly popular industry will bring about new and more intense strain on water resources, local resources, and land. Some examples of tourism locations most affected include: Marine and coastal, historic towns, cities, and cultural heritage sites, and fragile natural environments. Pressure from surging demand will lead these types of destinations to depleting conservation and biodiversity. The island of Ibiza has seen these concerns growing as they expected a record number of tourists in 2016. Following the growth in numbers, the local government's Department of Tourism stated that the island cannot support such an increase in tourism and the capacity of potable water, roads, treatment and desalination plants, and other infrastructures will be strained. The roots of this problem can partially be attributed to the lack of resource efficiency. The lack of resource efficiency branches off to 5 factors: over speculation of tourism development, excessive water consumption, consumption of

energy from non-renewable resources, material resource inefficiency, and a lack of “reduce, reuse, and recycle” mentalities.

Physical and Environmental Purity

The physical and environmental purity of tourism respectively relies on the quality of the landscape and minimization of pollution. Landscape quality can be deteriorated by aesthetic pollution, a destination's tendency to develop structures too different from the natural environment that distract the natural environment. As for pollution, like any other industry, pollution from tourism branches into: Air pollution and noise, solid waste, chemical waste, and littering, and sewage. Tourism is responsible for approximately 60% of all air transportation which makes it a problem to air pollution. Other forms of tourism-related transportation has been linked to the problem of noise pollution causing stress on human and wild environments. A larger problem is linked to tourist activities not having proper waste disposal. A lack of a rather simple system leads to death of thousands of marine animals and degrade environment's natural beauty. Another mismanaged waste disposal system is found in sewage-a system destination use that dumps their waste products that pollutes seas and lakes, destroys corals, and affects water supplies.

Biological Diversity

The comparison of benefits and negatives in tourism are strong in this particular sector. Tourism is critical to the funding of conservational efforts but the very industry itself sometimes infringes on the biodiversity of an ecosystem. This is because natural areas, habitats, and wildlife are subject to disrespect and damage. This problem is most relevant in National parks, reserves, and zoos but also the developments like coastal zones that leads to loss of habitat, dune destruction, and marine environments from diving operations. Policy developments are needed in: working with national parks and other protected areas, promoting the development and management of ecotourism, encouraging landholders to practice sustainable land management,

The Local Community's Role

The issue here is mass tourism companies taking over the role of local communities in tourism. The areas that need working on are the involvement of local communities in planning and decision making of tourism development, the benefits of tourism being used to further develop the local community, ensuring a quality of life and offering job opportunities to the local population. These issues must be solved because the current ways tourism treats local communities are generally unfriendly, foster human rights violations, displacement of peoples, and exploitation.

The Socio-economic Tourism

Although minimized to one paragraph, this branch of sustainable tourism is just as important as the environmental sustainability and may as well require another research report in itself. Although this

topic is to be discussed in the environmental committee, the codependence of the social, economic, and environmental sectors means that if we are to ensure environmental sustainability, the other two sectors must be considered in the question. The issue is that there currently is a lack of balance between these sectors where industries may sacrifice the environment for economic gain or conservationist movements do the opposite. What is recommended is a policy plan that ensures this balance through regulation and fair allocation of resources.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

This section will highlight a couple case studies listed in UNEP's "Making Tourism More Sustainable" guide

Australia's policies and strategies

Australia adopted the National Tourism Strategy in 1992 and the National Ecotourism Strategy in 1994. This serves as one of the pioneer developments in ecotourism and has served as a role model for other countries. The strategy stretched a year to raise awareness for sustainability by developing an Issues Paper or white paper-a report that informs readers of a complex issue that stimulates discussion to understand and solve an issue. Methods that were used to support the practical implication of sustainable tourism include integrated regional planning a natural resource management tools. The strategy's success can be derived from its dedicated funding of AU\$10 million from competitive grants. These grants went primarily to infrastructure development baseline studies and the themes of energy/waste minimization, ecotourism education, business development, and market research. Another unique trait of Australia's ecotourism strategy includes the inclusion of indigenous communities in the preservation of protected areas. This strategy of inclusion is similar to South Africa's strive to promote the tourism industry through the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act of 2003 which brought inclusion to their black citizens. An example of this inclusion can be found at the Uluru site, a popular World Heritage Site in the Northern territories of Australia. This inclusion has had an evident effect on the environmental protection of the Uluru site. The Anangu, the traditional Aboriginal owners of Uluru, holds cultural value on the Uluru site as it holds spiritual significance. Their views are respected by most visitors and recommend visitors to refrain from climbing the site. However, more progress is to be made as 38% of visitors do climb the site because the act is still legal.

Calvià's (Spain) localization and integration

Calvià initiated their path to ecotourism first and foremost with a diagnosis of their problems of sustainability in the social, environmental, and economic sectors. Thus they developed the Calvià Local Agenda 21 Action Plan in 1997 which specified 40 measures and 10 directions that the country must

head towards. One successful pillar of this action plan includes the socio-cultural integration of sustainable living amongst the life of local people. Calvià's need for sustainability has been publicly recognized and developed to become common practice.

Costa Rica's governmental recognition

Costa Rica's long history with ecotourism and sustainability has developed one of the world's best government initiatives and certification programs. Having such a biodiverse environment, Costa Rica's Tourist Board prides their country with scenic beauties, a fortified system of protected areas, social and political stability in the subject, and extensive education in efficient infrastructure and services. A Certification for sustainable Tourism (CST) was developed in the 1990s helped distinguish the businesses that claimed to be eco-friendly but actually weren't from the destinations that were truly sustainable. The strengths of the CST include government support and funding, high standards for sustainability, a formidable and wide accreditation body, and an expansive marketing program to promote the use of the certification amongst tourists. The beneficial effect of the CST is establishing a legally defined standard for sustainability which lead to certified businesses improving their practices. Fitting for a country whose slogan expresses "Costa Rica- No Artificial Ingredient"!

The international community's strive towards ecotourism

The UNEP and their branching organizations are the international community's strongest contributors to sustainable tourism. One of the greatest achievements of the UNEP is developing its white paper on the topic and aiding governments develop cohesive and practical plans while under the supervision of international specialists and advisors. Aside from the UN, a prominent non-profit organization named the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) is the largest and oldest ecotourism collaborative with members spanning 190 countries and contribution to the global network of ecotourism professionals and developments.

Possible Solutions

Measurement Instruments

Before tackling the problem, we first must know what exactly to tackle. For this, indicators and monitoring are important to assess the situation. There are 5 types of indicators. The first will help us show the current state of the industry which includes occupancy rates and tourist satisfaction. Another area to be recorded are stresses on the system like lack of resources or crime. Then, the impact of tourism, which involves the income of the local community and rate of deforestation. Afterwards we find management efforts which could include cleanup operations. And lastly, the effect of management actions which shows us the progress caused by new policies. Examples of this include changes in pollution levels and returning tourist numbers. The information gathered by indicator developments will intern be used in future policy making and planning. Monitoring sustainability requires these indicators to record the categories of Levels of tourism, state of the environment and society, and the activities of

visitors, enterprises, and the local community. An example of this instrument in use is the Iguazu Natural Forest Reserve in Argentina, whose conservation efforts lacked information on the location and visibility of different animal species. Thus, by training the local tour guides and tourists, records of sightings helped paint a picture of the problem.

Command and Control Instruments

The government possesses the power to apply legislation, regulation, and licensing to exert control over development in the tourism sector. Legislation can be reoriented towards sustainability in national governments. Tools provided by TIES and other international fora will help adjust legislation in national governments. This type of change can be shown in 2003 when the Vietnamese government developed a new tourism law. Collaboration between the Vietnam National Administration of tourism, Netherlands Development Organization, and WTO helped bring regional study tours and workshops. This process was meant to ensure the new laws are reasonable, associated with Vietnam's unique environment, and do not conflict and instead build on each other. Then, it helped provide guidelines to implement these changes for the long-term. That regards national legislation as it is inefficient to create a worldwide recognized legislation on environmental tourism because of diverse environments. Thus, International agreements can be pointed towards setting objectives and ensuring the follow up on those objectives through efficient regulation methods. They may also focus on specific regulations that concern things particularly sensitive environments like coral reefs, vulnerable communities, and global activities that may cause damage to environments like diving. Another region of concern is licensing and certification. The implementation of this development means the reduction of greenwashing and growing support for environmental products. Many licensing and certification programs exists and agreements can be made to bring these programs to the global scale.

Codes and Guidelines

Codes refer to set lists of “do’s and don’ts” while guidelines give detailed advice and information on how to act appropriately, sort of forming a social structure. Frameworks like the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, approved by the General Assembly and WTO, show how codes and guidelines can be of effect in environmentally safe tourism. Since regulation seems complicated to many of the general public and more concerned with the legislation, codes and guidelines pick up where regulation can’t reach. They are good for establishing a common approach, providing simple guidance to achieve objectives, and promoting reporting or auditing. Other variations of these codes include visitor’s codes of conduct and codes and guidelines on development and management processes.

Supporting instruments

This branch means infrastructure and capacity building. Many infrastructure can be made more sustainable through green technologies. Areas include transport, public utilities and services (water, energy, solid waste, sewerage, and telecommunications), and security and emergency services. The

development of this sector should be done while ensuring the developments meet the local community and tourism industry's needs, are cost effectiveness, and use sustainable practices and technologies. Capacity building involves developing understanding, knowledge, confidence, and skills regarding sustainable tourism. In an example, Side, Turkey's local government organized a workshop to deal with waste management in the area. The workshop activities introduced the issues and taught a scheme of going about the problem. Now 100 hotels, local shops, and restaurants participate in this scheme. Capacity building can be done with enterprises by giving direct advice, running training courses and workshops, and providing manuals. With local communities the development serves to build basic resource and political awareness, support, and point out institutions like local NGOs.

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