

Effect of Social Influences and Psychological Factors on the Enjoyment Derived from Making a Prediction

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Abstract:

Researchers have demonstrated the effectiveness of uncertainty and revealed that it interacts with other moderators to alter human levels of enjoyment; however, research on the effects of social influence (associated with different levels of uncertainty) and the need of uniqueness on the enjoyment of a shared experience is lacking. This study investigated how exposure to others' opinions affects people's levels of enjoyment derived from making predictions. We hypothesized that individuals who can refer to others' predictions before making predictions (low uncertainty) and who make correct predictions that differ from those of others would report high levels of enjoyment. Study 1 had a 3 (uncertainty: high vs. medium vs. low) × 2 (social influence: yes vs. no) between-subject design. In total, 362 subjects (age: 19–24 years) took part in the experiments, and data was analyzed through analysis of variance. In study 2, 248 participants (138 women and 110 men; average age: 21.5 years) took part. A 2 (uncertainty: high vs. low) × 2 (social influence: predicting first vs. viewing first) × 2 (uniqueness: low vs. high) between-subject design was employed. The effects of uncertainty degree, social influence, and the need for uniqueness on individuals' enjoyment levels were examined. The main effect of social influence was significant. The reported enjoyment levels of participants under social influence condition were significantly higher than that of those not under the social influence condition. Moreover, under the condition of low uncertainty, the mean enjoyment level was significantly higher when social influence was present compared with when it was absent. The findings demonstrated a significant three-way interaction between uniqueness, social influence and uncertainty. Participants with high uniqueness who viewed others' predictions first derived more enjoyment from low uncertainty than they did from high uncertainty. Our studies demonstrated the robust effects of presentation scenarios on enjoyment levels. We provided evidence that social influence can affect the enjoyment derived from event participation; this finding is consistent with those in the literature. We revealed a two-way interaction between social influence and degree of uncertainty. Additionally, we highlighted that the need for uniqueness had a significant effect on the enjoyment of social influences associated with uncertainty. Our studies have practical implications for gaming companies; marketing professionals can create scenarios involving social interaction for consumers who enjoy gambling. Hence, researchers should examine how others' opinions influence the enjoyment derived from shared experiences.

Keywords: *Social Influence, Uncertainty, Enjoyment, Uniqueness.*

I. INTRODUCTION

People often seek social information when making a decision that involves consumption activity-related uncertainty. For example, if a person is shopping for clothes with friends but cannot try on an item of clothing, they may be uncertain as to whether the item of clothing will fit them. However, if that person has the opportunity to try on an item of clothing and can consider opinions from their friends, their level of uncertainty with regard to whether the item will fit them decreases and their enjoyment of the purchasing process increases as a result of exposure to friends' opinions. Such scenarios involve a considerable level of social influence. Thus, this study aimed to determine whether social influence has a systematic effect on the extent to which people enjoy making predictions associated with uncertainties.

In recent years, psychology and consumer behavior research has explored how uncertainty affects enjoyment. Some studies have examined positive feelings of uncertainty; for example, such as the pleasurable uncertainty may be pleasant when the image elaboration level is appropriate [1]. Goldsmith and Amir [2] suggested that individuals expect optimal benefits when uncertainty emerges in relation to the outcome of a promotion (e.g., obtaining a low- or high-value gift). Other researchers have focused on negative feelings of uncertainty [3, 4]. Researchers [5] revealed that when consumers make predictions about events associated with uncertainty, they gain significantly less enjoyment from watching those events than do individuals who have not made such predictions. Furthermore, recent research [6] has examined the positive and negative influences of uncertainty with regard to marketing and promotional activities.

Although researchers have revealed the effectiveness of uncertainty and examined how it interacts with other moderators to lead to various levels of enjoyment, research pertaining to the effects of social influence associated with uncertainty on the enjoyment of a shared experience is lacking. Research [7] indicates that the effect of social influence on the enjoyment of an experience is mediated by the validity of a person's judgments and information related to assessments of an individual's interpersonal relationships. Relevant studies have examined the enjoyment derived from affective reactions to experiences involving the sharing of stimuli, but study focused on whether the existence of social influence can affect a person's level of enjoyment experienced at various levels of uncertainty when they are making predictions.

The present study examined how social influence affects people's enjoyment when they make a prediction under different degrees of uncertainty, and it provides new information for marketers interested in enhancing consumers' enjoyment to increase revenue. First, this study proposes that social influence can enhance enjoyment. Second, this study examined how social influence interacts with different levels of uncertainty. Third, the need for uniqueness was applied as a variable to investigate how such interactions are affected across these factors.

II. SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Social psychology research has explored how during interactions, individuals influence the moods and emotions of others [8-10]. Scholars have demonstrated that individuals wish to have positive relationships with others. In many aspects of their social lives, people enjoy sharing their experiences with others and receiving input from them. Peers have a strong influence on a person's materialism and compulsive buying behavior. For many individuals, their enjoyment of an experience is heightened when it is shared with others [11, 12]; such social influences can be normative or informative [13]. For example, people may enjoy the emotional involvement derived from being part of a group. Some researchers have posited that people's enjoyment of participating in an event is, to a large extent, driven by social interaction [14]. Mandryk, Inkpen, and Calvert [15] argued that when a person plays games with a friend, more positive emotions and higher engagement can be elicited than if they play alone. Zajonc [16] indicated that in scenarios in which more than one individual is present, a state of heightened arousal can be elicited, which promotes dominant responses to social facilitation. This effect explains an individual's awareness of other individuals and their effect on that individual's behavioral engagement and psychological involvement. Thus, we propose that social influence can affect an individual's level of enjoyment derived from participating in an event.

H1: Social influence affects a person's level of enjoyment derived from event participation. When social influence is present, individuals experience a higher level of enjoyment than when it is not present.

III. UNCERTAINTY AND ENJOYMENT

A recent study [6] provided a framework for predicting whether uncertainty will exhibit a positive or negative effect on marketing and promotional activities. Scenarios in which uncertainty heightens or lowers event enjoyment must be specified. Researchers have demonstrated that individuals have a tendency to avoid uncertain situations because such situations make them anxious or stressed [17, 18]. Furthermore, uncertainty is associated with anxiety and a struggle to adjust to new environments or cultures [19]. Often, individuals seek objects that pique their curiosity. Ultimately, they may find that the pleasure derived from such objects is not as they expected and feel disappointed [4]. Calvo and Castillo [3] indicated that the negative effects of uncertainty can elicit negative emotions. As a result, when they take part in an event they are uncertain about, they may derive feelings of displeasure from that event.

Although People often prefer uncertain to certain pleasurable events; however, they may lack awareness of this preference [20]. Generally, individuals have a preference for uncertain events because curiosity about an uncertain situation can elicit excitement [1]. As illustrated by Wilson et al. [20] events characterized by uncertainty can elicit the positive uncertain prospects, and individuals can derive more pleasure from certainty than they can from uncertainty [1]. When individuals can easily predict an event outcome, their emotional response to that outcome might be lower than their response to a difficult-to-predict outcome. When uncertainty is low, the level enjoyment derived from an event may also be low. A study on individual enjoyment, of which there are few, revealed that when individuals have a

substantial degree of certainty about what will transpire in a near-future event, they derive less enjoyment from that event [21]. However, as indicated previously, individuals may derive a higher level of enjoyment and more positive emotions from an event they take part in with friends compared with one they take part in alone [15]. Consequently, individuals may experience a higher level of enjoyment from low uncertainty when social influence is present.

H2: Social influence interacts with the degree of uncertainty related to an event and the enjoyment derived from taking part in that event. In low-uncertainty scenarios, individuals derive greater enjoyment when social influence exists compared with when it does not exist. In conditions involving a high or medium level of uncertainty, enjoyment is not significantly different regardless of whether social influence is present.

IV. NEED FOR UNIQUENESS AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE

People pursue uniqueness to improve their social and personal identity [22]. Individuals may derive satisfaction from their possessions. Numerous studies have investigated the need for uniqueness. Festinger [23] indicated that people are motivated by a perceived need for positive self-evaluation and compare their abilities with those of others. Epstude and Mussweiler [24] suggested that comparisons with others can strongly affect individuals' self-perceptions. De Kort and Ijsselsteijn [25] provided evidence that people enjoy experiences that make them feel sociable and proud but derive discomfort from shame, social pressure, and crowding. In accordance with some studies [7, 26], when individuals are exposed to incongruent social information, their enjoyment of events shared with others can be increased. The effect of social influences on event enjoyment can be moderated by differences in individuals' inclination to pursue uniqueness [27].

Individuals' performance levels may differ based on whether they are part of a group. Individuals generally hope to win contests and are typically resentful when others win. Similarly, when individuals do not achieve a desired outcome, they are usually resentful when others achieve that outcome. These reactions allow individuals to achieve psychological balance. Balance theory [28, 29] holds that when intra- or interpersonal tensions arise, people try to reduce such tensions by means of self-persuasion.

Often, individuals ponder what may have happened had they made a different decision than the one they actually made in a given scenario. If they conclude that their decision was the correct one, feelings of regret can be diminished. Regret is a crucial factor linked to the negative consequences of responsibility [30]. Individuals seek new information when they perceive a sense of responsibility; this is particularly true in scenarios where they perceive that their decisions are likely incorrect. When such a decision in question relates to individuals, decision-makers attempt to collect information to evaluate the wisdom of their decision [31]. Individuals often worry about not having made the correct decision, and this may decrease their enjoyment of an outcome and elicit feelings of regret.

Moreover, when an individual makes predictions in group settings, the predictions of others can affect their predictions. When an individual predicts an outcome in a situation of low uncertainty, a correctly predicted outcome may not bring them a feeling of achievement; an incorrectly predicted outcome, by contrast, may bring a sense of shame. If an individual makes a prediction about a certain outcome in a scenario of high uncertainty, a correctly predicted outcome may give them a sense of achievement and compensate for the feelings of shame associated with an incorrect prediction. Consequently, we propose that individuals would report high levels of enjoyment when, under a scenario of low uncertainty, they can refer to others' answers before making predictions and their predictions are correct and different from those of others. We assume that individuals would report high levels of enjoyment when, under a condition of high uncertainty, they make a prediction before they know others' answers and their predictions are correct and different from those of others.

H3: The interactions between social influence, uncertainty, and degree of uniqueness affect the enjoyment derived from event participation. In a scenario of low uncertainty, individuals experience high levels of enjoyment when social influence is present and their predictions are correct and different from those of others. In high-uncertainty conditions, individuals experience high levels of enjoyment when social influence is nonexistent and their predictions are correct and different from those of others.

Study 1 examined whether social influence can enhance an individual's enjoyment of an event (H1) and investigated the extent to which uncertainty has an effect on the relationship between enjoyment and social influence (H2). Study 2 further explored how uniqueness affects the enjoyment of social influence associated with uncertainty (H3).

4.1 Study 1

4.1.1 Design and participants

In total, 362 undergraduates (202 women and 160 men; average age: 21.5 years) at Chien-Hsin University of Science and Technology in Taiwan participated in the study. Participants who completed the experiment were given a set of small batteries as an honorarium. A 3 (uncertainty: high vs. medium vs. low) \times 2 (social influence: yes vs. no) between-subject design was employed in this study. The independent variables were uncertainty and social influence, and the dependent variable was enjoyment.

4.1.2 Procedure

The experiment was conducted in a computer room. Upon arrival, each participant was asked to sit in front of a computer. Each undergraduate played an online guessing game with nine other contestants. The participating undergraduates were asked to read instructions appearing on the computer screen before the game commenced. They were informed of the numbers of white and balls in a box before the computer system randomly picked up a ball from that box. Different combinations of numbers of white and red balls were employed for the uncertainty manipulation. Under the condition of high uncertainty, the box contained 50 white balls and 50 red balls. Under the condition of a medium level of uncertainty, the box

contained 30 and 70 white and red balls, respectively and 30. In the condition of low uncertainty, the box contained 90 and 10 red and white balls, respectively [5]. In the social influence condition (yes), participants could view other participants' predictions (6 red balls and 3 white balls), whereas participants under the condition of social influence (no) proceeded directly to the next step without viewing others' predictions. Subsequently, participants were instructed to predict a ball's color by clicking on their prediction on the screen. They then proceeded to the subsequent step, at which point the correct ball color was announced and participants learned whether their prediction was correct. After learning of the game's outcome, participants were asked to rate their level of enjoyment during the game on a scale from -7 to 7 [32].

4.1.3 Results

A 3 (uncertainty: high vs. medium vs. low) \times 2 (social influence: yes vs. no) analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed for an analysis of results. Uncertainty level significantly affected event enjoyment [$F(2,330)=4.96, p<.01$]. The mean level of enjoyment of those in the condition of high uncertainty ($M=4.42$) was higher than that of those in conditions of low ($M=3.23$) and medium ($M=3.41$) levels of uncertainty. Additionally, the main effect of social influence was significant [$F(1,330)=12.82, p<.01$]. The enjoyment levels of individuals with social influence ($M=4.26$) were significantly higher than such levels in those without social influence ($M=3.12$). Thus, H1 was supported. A marginally significant two-way interaction was evident between the two independent variables [$F(2,330)=2.82; p=.06$]. As Figure 1 indicates, condition of low uncertainty, the mean level of enjoyment level was significantly higher with social influence ($M=4.32$) than it was without it [$M=2.14; F(1,330)=13.78, p<.01$]. In the condition involving a medium level of uncertainty, the mean level of enjoyment was not significantly different regardless of whether social influence was present ($M=3.85$) or not [$M=2.98; F(1,330)=1.89, NS$]. Under the condition of high uncertainty, the mean enjoyment level was not significantly different regardless of whether social influence was present [$M=4.61$] or not [$M=4.23; F(1,330)=0.67, NS$]. Therefore, these results support H2.

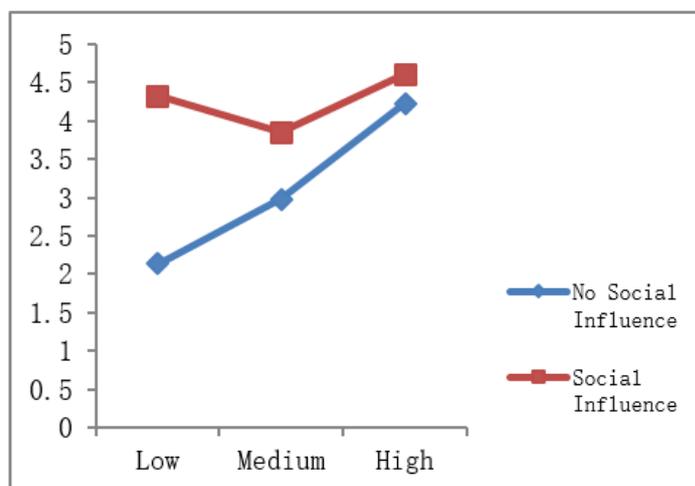


Figure 1: Influence of uncertainty and social influence on enjoyment

4.1.4 Discussion

Study 1's results provide evidence that individuals have a tendency to derive enjoyment from others' predictions when participating in an event. Uncertainty levels can affect an individual's enjoyment of an event. When individuals participate in an event under a condition of low uncertainty, they tend to lack feelings of surprise and achievement; thus, they derive less enjoyment from this condition. However, when individuals are under a high uncertainty condition, the associated excitement can increase their feelings of pleasure. We revealed that social influence can affect the enjoyment associated with uncertainty. Participants exposed to social influence in the low-uncertainty condition had greater outcome enjoyment than those who were not exposed to social influence. This can be explained by the fact that for individuals, the presence of others can elicit high levels of engagement, which enables them to have greater psychological involvement.

Study 1 provides evidence that social influence interacted with the degree of uncertainty and affected the level of enjoyment gained from making predictions. To further clarify the effect of social influence, in Study 2, social influence was investigated using two scenarios: predicting first and viewing first. In the "predicting first" condition, participants made predictions before they were shown the predictions of others, whereas in the "viewing first" condition, participants viewed others' predictions before they made their own predictions. Moreover, reported levels of enjoyment in the medium- and low-uncertainty conditions were not significantly different, the medium-uncertainty condition was removed in Study 2. We further added uniqueness as an independent variable to examine how enjoyment level was affected by uncertainty and social influence.

4.2 Study 2

4.2.1 Design and participants

In total, 248 undergraduates (138 women and 110 men; average age: 21.5 years) from National Central University in Taiwan participated in the study. Participants who completed the experiment were given a set of small batteries as an honorarium. A 2 (uncertainty: high vs. low) \times 2 (social influence: predicting first vs. viewing first) \times 2 (uniqueness: low vs. high) between-subject design was employed. The independent variables were uncertainty, social influence, and uniqueness, and the dependent variable was enjoyment. As with Study 1, the degree of uncertainty was subject to manipulation. In the "predicting first" condition, participants made predictions before they were shown the predictions of others, and in the "viewing first" condition, participants viewed the predictions of others before they made their own predictions. The degree of the uniqueness of participants was low if their predictions were the same as those of most of the other participants, and the degree of uniqueness of participants as high if their predictions were not the same as most of the other participants' predictions.

4.2.2 Procedure

The experiment was conducted in a computer room. Upon arrival, each participant was asked to sit in front of a computer. The participating undergraduates played an online guessing game with nine other

contestants. Participants were requested to read instructions on the computer screen before the game commenced. They were informed of the number of white and red balls in a box before the computer system randomly picked up a ball from the box. The degrees of uncertainty were manipulated, as in Study 1.

Participants in the "predicting first" condition first made a prediction and clicked on their prediction. Subsequently, they were shown the predictions of the other nine contestants (6 and 3 red and white balls, respectively). The participants were then informed of the outcome and told whether their predictions were correct. Participating undergraduates in the "viewing first" condition followed the same procedure except that they saw the other nine contestants' predictions (6 and 3 red and white balls, respectively) as a reference before they made their own predictions. All participants then provided ratings for their level of enjoyment of the game on a scale from -7 to 7 [32].

4.2.3 Results

For an analysis of results, we conducted a 2(uncertainty: high vs. low) × 2 (social influence: predicting first vs. viewing first) × 2 (uniqueness: low vs. high) ANOVA. We revealed a significant two-way interaction between uncertainty and social influence [$F(1,240)=4.56, p<.05$]. As Figure 2 indicates, participants under the condition of low uncertainty who had seen the predictions of others before making their own predictions ($M = 4.33$) had higher enjoyment levels than had those who made predictions before viewing those of others [$M=3.0$; $F(1,240)=5.05, p<.05$]. However, under the condition of high uncertainty, mean enjoyment level differences were nonsignificant regardless of whether social influence existed ($M=3.51$) or not [$M=3.96$; $F(1,240)=0.58, \text{nonsignificant}$]. Additionally, a significant three-way interaction was present between uncertainty, uniqueness, and social influence [$F(1,240)=7.87, p<.01$]. Figure 3 reveals that under the "predicting first" condition associated with a high level of uniqueness, participants in the high uncertainty condition had higher enjoyment levels ($M=4.7$) than had those in the low-uncertainty condition [$M=2.53$; $F(1,240)=5.87, p<.05$]. Furthermore, in the "viewing first" condition associated with a high level of uniqueness, participants in the condition of low uncertainty ($M=5.2$) had higher enjoyment levels than had those in the condition of high uncertainty [$M= 3.26$; $F(1,240)=5.60, p<.05$]. Therefore, these results supported H3.

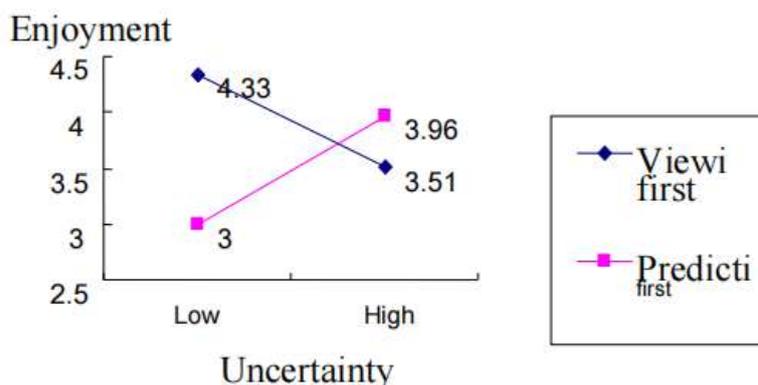


Figure 2: Effect of the interaction between social influence and uncertainty on enjoyment

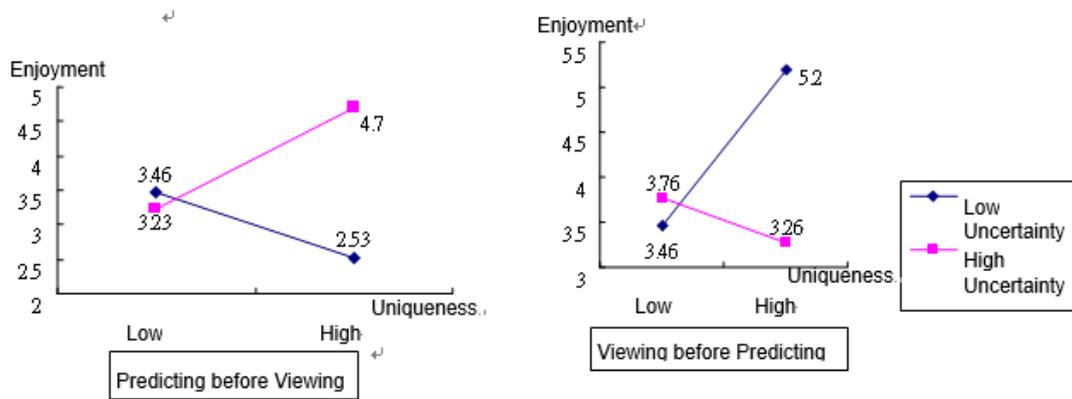


Figure 3: Effect of the interaction between uncertainty, social influence, and uniqueness on enjoyment

4.2.4 Discussion

The results of Study 2 support the hypotheses related to uncertainty, social influence, and uniqueness. Under low-uncertainty conditions, the likelihood that individuals will make accurate predictions is higher than that under high-uncertainty conditions, which leads to feelings of shame when individuals make incorrect predictions. However, they also fail to feel a sense of achievement when they make accurate predictions under these conditions. Therefore, when individuals are exposed to others' predictions before offering their own, their predictions differ from those of most others (high uniqueness), and their predictions are correct, they will experience high levels of enjoyment because they consider that they are not influenced by the opinions of others. Under conditions of high uncertainty, the probability of making a correct prediction is low when a person's prediction precedes those of others. In such situations, accurate predictions lead to higher levels of enjoyment. This finding can be explained by the difficulty people have in making accurate predictions under conditions of high uncertainty; in such scenarios, feelings of achievement are associated with accurate predictions.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study examined how exposure to others' opinions affects people's enjoyment levels with regard to predictions. The studies conducted revealed that others' opinions had a strong effect on enjoyment. First, we provide evidence that social influence affects the enjoyment derived from event participation, and this is consistent with findings in the literature [14]. Second, we revealed a two-way interaction between the degree of uncertainty and the presence of social influence. Third, we demonstrated that the need for uniqueness had a significant effect on the enjoyment of the social influence associated with uncertainty; this finding is linked to the research of De Kort and Ijsselstein [25]. Finally, the results of Study 1 and Study 2 have practical implications for gaming companies; marketing professionals marketers may be able to create scenarios involving social interaction for consumers who enjoy gambling. Hence, researchers

should further examine how others' opinions affect the enjoyment derived from shared experiences.

VI. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study was not without limitations. First, the hypothetical scenario-based experiments related to the virtual world; the results may have been different had real-world settings been applied. In the future, researchers should examine the differences between the outcomes presented in this study. Second, undergraduate students were recruited as participants, and related enjoyment levels are likely different among diverse consumer groups. The extent to which are findings are generalizable to other consumer groups is unclear. This could be a topic of future research associated with related outcomes. We demonstrated that social influence had a significant effect on enjoyment in Study 2; however, we did not conduct in-depth investigations of the related mechanisms underlying the effect. For example, our allocation of nine contestants' predictions (3/6 white balls and 6/3 red balls) in study 2 may have influenced the enjoyment levels reported. We did not apply different allocations of the nine contestants' predictions, and thus, we are confirmed whether participants would have derived the same enjoyment level from the event had the allocation approach differed (e.g., 7/2 red balls and 2/7 white balls). Finally, in future studies, perhaps the consequences of related findings could be further investigated. For example, the provision of a prize for correct predictions may have resulted in different outcomes in Study 1. In the future, researchers could investigate the factors that could lead to more comprehensive results.

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