

A View on Global Tourism: The Philippines in Asia

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Abstract

From the perspectives of international relations, this paper discusses some general trends and characteristics of tourism as a phenomenon in the Philippines and in Asia. Specifically, the discussion covers the givens of tourism such as geographical and natural bounties, tourism and socio-economic benefits and costs, and socio-cultural-ecological conditions and how nations and similar entities pursue deliberate and non-deliberate interventions linked to tourism within the domestic and Asian regional levels of cooperation. Nation-building and development have been the main rationale for tourism in most Asian nations. Separately, nations and sub-nation state local entities have adapted varied strategies to promote and develop tourism considering their distinct opportunities and challenges. Collectively, these nations and local entities, bound by the inevitable effects of globalization also seek to link tourism development pursuits beyond domestic horizons.

Indeed, tourism is an area that is full of enormous challenges and opportunities for both developed and developing countries in Asia as well as in the world. Tourism is a human endeavor and activity that if properly harnessed through state and non-state development strategies, it can: a) contribute to the integrative functions between and among communities, nations, and regions; b) serve as a convenient policy instrument for economic development, and, c) provide a universal bridging function for socio-cultural interface among peoples of interacting countries.

Needless to say, like any other human-oriented undertaking, tourism is inherently faced with challenges and limitations. Tourism enhances the intensifying flow of people across national and socio-cultural borders which is the very essence of tourism itself. The volatile speed and quantitative dynamics and effects of tourist people flow cause legal, social, security, ethical, cultural, ecological environmental inter-human adjustments and coping-up challenges. As such, both the benefits as well as the responsibilities related to global tourism must be shared by nations and similar players engaged in tourism.

Finally, the *Meta-nation state* concept is the framework of presentation.

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1 . Introduction

Historically, tourism is one of the earliest, the most common, and the most liberal modes of interfaces between and among peoples. Indeed, man is a natural tourist throughout the ages. The effects of the movement of people on tour beyond their domiciles brought about the more developed and stabilized long-term interactions among cultures and civilization which in turn gave rise to more <extended formalized> concrete arrangements like exchanges in commerce, trade, knowledge, technology, educations, and the arts of living.

In Asia, the dynamics of interactions for development and regional integration can be appreciated from the perspective of promoting and developing tourism as an integrative and functional undertaking for individual, community, national, regional and continental activities.

With regards to tourism as an activity, it refers to the journeying of people from their homeland to other places, far or near, transcending geographical, physical, economic, political, and cultural boundaries. It can be a goal and it can be an instrument. Tourism is contiguous not only in terms of geographical coverage, but also in terms of relevance to other elements like economics, politics, culture, and similar human endeavors. Tourism is said to be biggest invisible export of many countries. In many nations, revenues generated from tourism comprise the largest source of income, dealing with a vast array of business activities ranging from transportation (land, air and sea) and sales of handicrafts to aircrafts.

2 . Meta-nation state relations and Emergent Linkage Model

The world today is undergoing fast, multi-dimensional and multi-level evolution that seems to be chaotic and overwhelming. The phenomenon of globalization that envelops every area of human undertakings adds to the complications of the nature, trends, and prospects of national and regional developments. Tourism as a subject of study and analysis, in Asia (East Asia /ASEAN) is subject to the realities, changes, and evolution taking place in its environments involving the individual countries and the region.

Before proceeding to the discussion of tourism and its dynamics in Asia (East Asia /

ASEAN), I would like to introduce the theoretical and practical framework upon which the discussion could be premised. This is the *Meta-nation state* relation concept and approach.

In brief, the Meta-nation state relations concept postulates that inter-nation state relation has been shifting from the conventional state-to-state dominated mono-channel mode of exchanges and interchange to a dynamically multi-strata, multi-channeled structure and mode of interflow between and among nation states. This intertwines with the evolutionary processes within the domestic and in the external nation state environment setting. The concept views international interactions in a broad prism that encompasses the components and factors within and outside the nation state. The scope of conceptual subjects and objects in inter-state relations is expanded from the narrow traditional nation state-dominated channel and mode of inter-relations, which has been the mainstay of international exchanges, to the inward sub-nation state levels and the outward peripheral spheres of dynamic interactions. It is important to note, though, that the Metanation state concept retains the importance of the nation state as the core and central foundation of international relations from which most if not all sub-interactions or supra-nation state interface emanate. The concept simply just illustrate the appropriate emphasis on the roles and importance of components and interface at the main, secondary, and other sub-level loci within and peripheral to the nation state. The Meta-nation state is based on the premise that the common denominator of the nation state, the intra-nation state, and the supra-nation state realms is the ***nation state DNA***. This is the common essence that distinguishes, differentiates, and identifies the nation state as an inter-actor, player, and entity, and venue in the interface between and among nations. In international relations and global interactions, the ***nation state DNA*** of players and entities is manifested by the partial or total identification with, and practice of, the distinct and unique total way of life which comprise their cultural identity (tangible and intangible) as a people or country compared with other counterparts.

The Meta-nation state concept and structural model comprise of three levels: (A) the state level (core or principal ***nation state stratum***), (B) the intra-nation state level (***sub-nation state stratum***), and (C) the supra-nation state or extra-nation state peripheral level (***supra-nation state stratum***). In terms of the dynamics of international interface, these strata / levels provide the channels through which, and where all forms of imaginable exchanges cross-interact regardless of stratum and venue. The directions and correspondence of the levels or strata could be in variable or flexible matching and combinations. Thus, the basic variations of the strata or levels of international and global relations and interactions can as follows in any order: (1) Nation state-to-nation state strata of interactions, (2) Nation state to intra-nation state strata of interactions, (3) Nation state to supra-nation state or extra-nation state strata of

interactions, (4) Intra-nation state to intra-nation state strata of interactions, (5) Intra-nation state to supra-nation state or extra-nation state strata of interactions, and (6) Supra-nation state or extra-nation state to supra-nation state or extra-nation state strata of interactions.

In the Meta-nation state paradigm, the structure and the loci of relationships and interactions extend below the nation state (sub-nation state) and beyond the nation state (peripheral strata) jurisdiction. The model encompasses the flow dynamics and directions of interactions in both state and non-state interface (players and channels). Moreover, the individual strata in the meta-nation state model are not limited to their counterpart strata in the interacting partner country. The individual strata can interchangeably crisscross any or all strata in the interface, e.g. state players can interact with non-state players located at the state strata, intra-nation state strata, and the supra-nation state or extra-nation state strata.

The Meta-nation state encompasses the natural (ethnic, racial, and such naturally-evolved development) and the superficially (legal, functional, political, etc...) created characteristics of nations and society. It also embraces comprehensively the economic, political, security, cultural, and other dimensions of inter-relationships. Using the Meta-nation state prism, contemporary Asian, East Asian / ASEAN tourism interactions can be observed and understood from wide-ranging depictions, angles and perspectives as they occur in multilateral and bilateral relations. The realities, and issues and prospects could be theoretically analyzed, as they emerge in multi-level venue, in multi-player

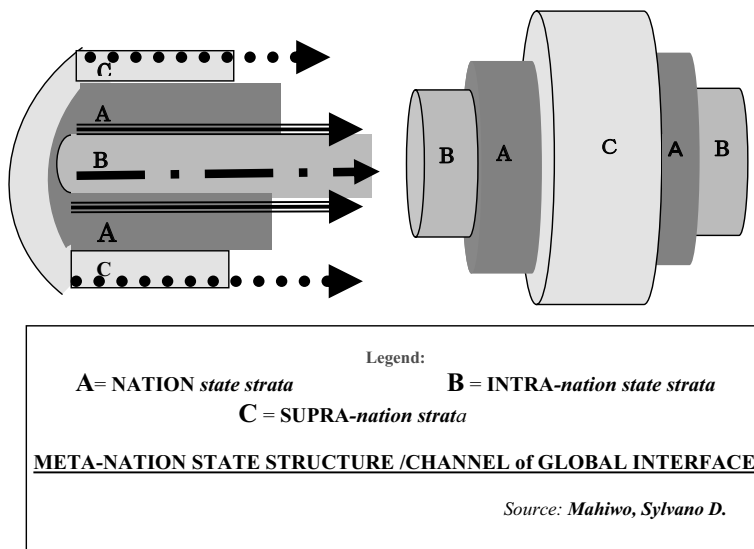


Figure 1. Meta-nation state structure / channel of global interface

participation, and in multi-dimensional dynamics.

Figure 1. is a simplified representation of the **Metanation state** concept, which indicates the loci of the levels, channels, directions (two-way traffic) and the categories of players involved in the interface between and among entities directly and indirectly related within the nation state in global interactions described as follows:

- | | |
|---|---------|
| (1) Nation state = Nation state interface | A·····A |
| (2) Nation state = Intra-nation state interface | A·····B |
| (3) Nation state = Supra-nation state interface | A·····C |
| (4) Intra-nation state = Intra-nation state interface | B·····B |
| (5) Intra-nation state = Supra-nation state interface | B·····C |
| (6) Supra-nation state = Supra-nation state interface | C·····C |

In the metanation state dynamics, international interactions involve the following players or actors in the field of tourism which can be at the policy level, the organizational level, implementation level and in the programs and activities of tourism developments:

(1) Nation state (A) players

The inter-actor or player is the nation state itself, referring to the government or related entities representing the sovereign state, its government agencies and instrumentalities. In the interface, usually, the authority and the indivisible power of the state are paramount in the interaction. This is the core and first-line player in the metanation state concept. The individual nations of the world (192 sovereign nations, mostly members of the united Nations) are the core players in this category.

(2) Intra-nation state (B) players

The entities that are located within the nation state, or that which has are part of, and identified with the nation state. Sub-national entities like local government units (LGU), sub-administrative regions, provinces, cities, municipalities, counties, and local communities. These players also can include institutions, associations, and the like. The intra-nation state actors encompass both public, quasi public entities (GOs), and private or non-state entities like multi-national corporations, non-government organizations (NGOs), and individuals or groups belonging to the nation state and such players carry the nation state DNA of that country. In this category, almost all the entities (persons, groups, and institutions) within the embrace of the nation state pursuing different interests and perspectives are players. They are not the state per se but a sub-part of the nation state; hence, they represent indirectly the filtered interest of the nation state.

(3) Supra-nation state (C) players

The entities that are composed of the nation states or the intra-nation state players that are clustered into larger entities and players without discarding the nation state identity. The UN (with all its international and regional agencies) ASEAN, APEC, EU, and other similar groupings are the typical examples under the supra-nation state category. Interactions occur with the supra-nation state entities as either actors or as interaction venues.

The Meta-nation state paradigm could illustrate and reflect the dynamics of the players in the global and local contemporary tourism in the Asian region, or any region for that matter. Being local and being global are not contradictory phenomena in the Meta-nation state tourism interface in terms of policy initiatives, policy implementation, facing problems and solving them, and development and progress.

3. Measuring Tourism as a Dimension of Development Integration in Asia

In the Asian, East Asian and ASEAN regions, cooperation in the promotion and development of meta-nation state tourism certainly can enhance regional integration.

Imagining a meta-nation state tourism map over Asia, the development and underdevelopment qualities of tourism can be discerned in the (A) nation state strata, (B) intra-nation state strata, and (C) supra-nation state strata. In the same logic, the degree of regional cooperation between among Asian nations, the ASEAN bloc, and their partners and counterparts within and outside the region regarding tourism can be traced and monitored through the meta-nation state levels (A,B,C) of interface.

Tourism is characterized by the following basic observations; 1) Tourism involves the smallest and broadest area of regional interface in terms of people participation, 2) Tourism is the most sensitive / vulnerable and the most stable form of interface, 3) Tourism cuts across geographical, economic, political, social and cultural boundaries. 4) Tourism is a goal and an instrument to other aspects of development. Due to the above nature of tourism, its progress and advancement in many countries and regions could be very difficult to measure quantitatively. Moreover, while tourism is an important and actively pursued human activity in Asia (East Asia, ASEAN, etc...) it is at the same time intertwined with other dimensions like economic, political, cultural, and other aspects of development of nations and people.

Furthermore, regarding tourism in Asian countries, due to various factors and situations it is nearly impossible to accurately identify to which country and /or entity certain types or category of tourism as an undertaking belongs to. The development of tourism and all its related attributes (positive and negative) taken as a whole, is the

outcome of the pendulum swings within the Meta-nation continuum whereby such outcome are molded by the influences from the distinct and collective strata and channels they pass through. For example, from the intra-nation state to the nation state, or from the national level to the supra-nation level, the effects are manifold. Apparently, the progress and development of tourism industries and activities occurring within each member nation (nation state strata) serving as tourism hubs, radiate region wide to the Asian (ASEAN) region. The same tourism progress and development also radiate or seep downward to the sub-nation state or intra-nation state levels. The degree of development or underdevelopment in tourism can be different depending on what meta-nation state strata it is measured.

Because of the this inherent overlap and spill-over combination of tourism within the contiguous areas of regional interactions between and among Asian countries, the progress of tourism can also be a kind of complementary and supplementary factor in economic, political, strategic, and socio-cultural relations in the Asian region in general, and between ASEAN and other countries like Japan, in particular.

4 . Effects of Tourism on Asian Regional Integration

Integrative function

Tourism triggers massive and frequent journeys of people of different ideas, political beliefs, economic status, and socio-cultural backgrounds beyond the borders of their home countries. In Asia undoubtedly, tourism creates the greatest single integrating process in the continent. With this backdrop, there is no argument against the apparent effects of tourism regarding tangible windfall such as economic and business benefits. Economists and business people are in the best position to assess the economic gains from the huge tourism industry in Asia. These specifically refer to transport industries (air, sea, and land transport) and tourism-based industries like hotels, shopping malls, services, and so forth. The countries of Asia and its sub-regions that are strategically located in the tourism highways derive a greater bulk of their income resources from the tourism industry. Almost all Asian nations identify tourism as a major state and non-state target for development and source of income resources.

Aside from the tangible effects of tourism, the long-term and desirable integration of the Asian region and in its sub-regions like East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, North Asia, Central and West Asia through tourism can be enhanced. Since tourism is **people-oriented**, the mere movements of peoples and the multi-level interactions and contacts that tourism generate have integrative functions in varying degrees in a multi-dimensional way over the Asian peoples and societies.

The linkages between and among the different Meta-nation state strata or levels of interface already described like economic, political, social, cultural and information/knowledge through tourism people interface result in the lowering of the walls and gaps that separate Asian peoples and communities. Indeed, the currents of tourism that flow through the Meta-nation state channels tear away the barriers caused by lack of interface and interactions that divide people. When tourists travel and venture outside their homelands and get in contact with foreign lands and foreign societies, the process of integration in various forms occur as people and institutions inter-accommodate among themselves.

One phenomenon that meta-nation state tourism brings is what can be referred to as the “Show Case” domino effects in society. This means that through tourism bridges, people are given the opportunities to be exposed to new ideas and culture as they to interact with other societies with different economic development level, different political orientation, different values system, and simply different ways of life. Discoveries and later on adaptation of, for instance new technologies, different approaches to institutions, ways of governance, methods of productions, and different ways of individual and social living give rise to “imitation from example”, many of which are picked up from the tourism highways.

The term “GLOCAL” has already gained acceptance in usage to refer to the adaptation of global and local ways and conditionality. Global tourism has been the more effective agent towards this trend. Tourism puts high interest in local and global focus. In Asia local tourism and international tourism are being promoted and developed. The ideal long-term effect of GLOCAL tourism, aside from the tangible and immediate economic benefits, could be broader and deeper understanding between and among nations as they are immersed in the regional/global arena, which is just an extension of the local grounds of tourism destination.

Also, one intangible effect of regional and global tourism in Asia, whether intended or unintended, is liberalism and inculcation of people democracy. Tourism flows in a continuum and is extremely resistant to created man-made or artificially constructed border barriers of whatever kind. Tourism is resistant to tight controls of movement of people, the freedom of expression, and such other recognized universal inherent human rights. Therefore, in nations and regions where there is advancement and progress in the free flow of touring people and tourism activities, there is presumed progress in democracy and liberalism. This is happening in the countries and regions of Asia today. Tourism is changing Asia civilization.

5. Contemporary Philippine Tourism in the Meta-nation State Relations

In the Meta-nation state conceptual application, in the case of Philippines, it is a reality that the tourism industry is one of the priority areas as manifested in the statistical growth of intra-Asian and extra-Asian increase in number of tourists in recent year. The Philippines passively and actively participates in the pursuit of tourism promotion and development as a member of the Southeast Asian and Asian community of nation states. In general, from a macro-level view, tourism develops and grows by means of two basic patterns, namely;

A) Natural people flow

The utilization of natural endowments and physical geological resources in a country or region like beauty and wonders of mountains, sea beaches, rivers, and geological natural sceneries and formation, as well as the seasonal cycle that are the main factors and the natural allies of tourism growth and developments. The main capital stocks are the well-known natural endowments in the Philippines islands of Luzon, Visayas groups, and Mindanao. In these situations, there maybe efforts and initiatives from the state, government or the private sectors to develop tourism but such interventions are minimal or passive. Tourism activities that are left to nature attractions and less or inadequate community or state regulation could lead to unbridled tourism. The irony is that while natural and ecology endowed tourism resources provide the bulk of tourism attraction, unbridled tourism in varying degrees can be magnets for degrading or eroding the natural environment. This is being experienced by tourist destination countries especially the so-called developing countries like the Philippines. The tourism natural bounties of the 7,100 islands of the Philippines are vulnerable to the adverse effects of unbridled tourism, if appropriate interventions are not taken.

B) Deliberately-guided people flow

Beyond the natural inducement of people flow across national boundaries, tourism as a human activity is being enhanced and promoted through the deliberate intervention of nations and regions through state and non-state schemes and strategies. In the Philippines, both the public and private sector entities are engaged in action tourism development pursuits. The governments and private sectors deliberately participate in promoting and developing policies, infrastructures and facilities, and tourism-related undertakings. To complement the natural tourism endowments, these deliberate endeavor attempt to create man-made tourist attractions in the form of tourist parks, shopping mall

facilities, recreational establishments, and other innovative tourism-related program such as homestays, eco-tourism, medical tourism, among others. Most of the ASEAN nations, individually and collectively are putting high premium on tourism promotion and development as a goal in relation to nation building.

The Philippines as one of the largest tourism nation

The Philippines ranks one of the top countries on a two-way traffic flow-of journeying, going to and from home country to foreign countries. There are about 10 million Filipinos living and traveling from the country of origin to other countries. Regardless of whether by unintended or deliberate scheme that makes the Filipinos “tour” the world, there is no denying of the fact that this Diaspora of Filipinos to foreign shores greatly contribute to regional and global tourism. Compared to other countries, the Philippine presence abroad through the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), for whatever motivations behind, is a unique form of tourism. The idea of encouraging each Filipino living (working) abroad to bring along a foreign friend to visit the Philippines can be a smart and easy way of promoting tourism not only for the Philippines, but in Asia and in the world.

At the nation-state level policies, similar to the approach of other countries in the ASEAN and Asian regions, the Philippines, as a nation pursues tourism development through national policies and programs. The Department of Tourism is the government agency mandated to take care of tourism affairs. Tourism policies, programs and activities are initiated in the national, regional, and local levels of the administrative system of government. The participation of the private and business sectors are enjoined or invited to partner with the public sector in the promotion and development of tourism in the country.

Challenges to tourism

Needless to say tourism is by nature an extremely sensitive and most vulnerable as a mode of people exchanges and inter-flow across national borders. Any disturbance in the geo-territorial, social, and in the entire tourism physical and non-physical environment whether natural or human initiated can crush down the buds of tourism. The issues and problems of attracting, developing and maintaining whatever progress made in tourism are constant challenges for tourism-pursuing nations.

The following natural and man-made factors illustrate the vulnerability that tourism is encountering not only in the Philippines but in other parts of Asia.

Peace and order

The peace and order situation is the single most important factor for global tourism to thrive and be sustained. In the contemporary world, hardly a day passes without the major daily news media reporting happenings of terrorism and violence everywhere. Ethnic wars, social unrests, violent political conflicts, and simply terrorist acts, and lack of peace and order are among the major happenings in many nations, including Asia as a whole that are deterrents to tourism.

As illustration and experience by many nations, the stagnation of tourism due to peace and order are exacerbated in the regional and international level when tourist source countries issue travel advisories or travel bans to their nationals or citizens to avoid or cancel travels to affected countries perceived as unsafe and security risks for tour destinations. Indeed the safety of travel is a major factor in the advancement of tourism. In the most recent experience of tourism in the Philippines, the regrettable and unfortunate taking of some Hong Kong tourist in Manila on August 23, 2010 was a case in point. Almost immediately when the hostage-taking incident resulting in the death of a number of some of the tourists was flashed all over the globe, travel advisories or bans were issued by the governments of foreign countries, including ASEAN neighbors. (In some separate instances, travel bans or advisories to the Philippines have been issued not to cover the whole country, but limited to peace and order affected areas only like Mindanao island). Cancellation of a great number of travel plans and hotel reservations were cancelled or postponed, thus giving a big negative blow to Philippine tourism. While the nation does not monopolize the effects of peace and order problems, it suffered a tourism slump for sometime. Tourism is hyper-sensitive to peace and order conditions.

The presence or lacking of tourism-oriented facilities is another challenge in the tourism industry for many countries in the Asian region. The construction of adequate and quality infrastructures like airports, seaports, land transport systems, hotels, shopping facilities, and other tourist amenities are the boosters of tourism. In its own limited but active way, the Philippines has been making inputs to tourism by including in its plans to expand highways, new airports, and improving the sea transport system (RO-RO). The archipelagic geography of the country with 7,100, islands make it expensive to develop tourism infrastructures very challenging administratively and financially. In the regional and international fronts, the country, in partnership with private sectors are trying to rationalize and increase flight routes between the country and Asian countries. (In Japan the continuous improvements of international airports are examples of tourism promotion pursuits in the Asian and international level).

A perennial challenge to tourism in the Philippine are the effects of global warming and natural disasters. There are 25 to 28 typhoons that visit the Philippines yearly.

Volcanic eruptions are considered some of the natural hazards in the country. (One irony is that one volcano- Mt. Mayon attracts tourists each time it erupts or spews glowing lava). These natural phenomena are beyond the control of man but the adequacy and quality of disaster-mitigating policies, rescue and medical care, rules and regulations for people safety, and such institutional protection procedures are a challenge for tourism.

The direct relationship between global warming and tourism brings us to the realization that issues and problems related to tourism are inter-woven with contemporary human concerns of regional and global scale.

One other factor and challenge for tourism is health and diseases related-issues across tourist source and tourist destinations. The near-panic and travel restrictions across borders during outbreaks of diseases like AIDS, SARS, avian flue, dengue, and such feared threatening diseases are scare factors to tourism. While the Philippines is grouped with tropical Asia where the diseases are prevalent, the cases vis-à-vis tourism is manageable. But then potential of regional epidemic is always present in Asia. The implementation of health quarantine measures by immigration rules among nations can be viewed as promoting and or discouraging tourism in Asian countries.

6 . Prospects of Balancing Tourism Development

In presenting the Philippine tourism development situation, it's not the intention to make detailed discussions. The overall view on tourism in the country is expected to undergo evolution in a comprehensive pattern involving the tangible and intangible factors. Prospectively, the general concerns for Philippine tourism in the long-run are as follows:

1. How can the natural endowments of tourism will be protected, preserved, conserved, and maintained while the people benefit from tourism development?
2. How can the pursuit of man-made interventions like construction of roads, airports, seaports, hotels, and modern tourism business infrastructures and facilities be balance with the preservation of human ecology environment and socio-cultural heritage?
3. How can a choice of reasonably regulated tourism activities in the country be properly guided to avoid the undesirable effects of unbridled tourism promotion and practices on individuals and communities in their traditional values, culture, and social ways of life?
4. How can tourism be promoted without disrupting peace and order, health and hygiene, and harmony of societies, including their material and non-material / spiritual values and culture?

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5. How can local conditionalities vis-à-vis global conditionalities be harmonized and balanced in the tourism continuum?

In this regard, Philippine tourism development and progress is not isolated from the natural and man-made challenges and opportunities in the Asian and global arena. Each country, however, has its own peculiarities and conditionalities in approaching tourism as a means and a goal in development.

Finally, the people are the most important tourism resource aside from the natural resources and deliberately man-made resources. Needless to say, in the final analysis, it is the human being, the people of a nation that are the alpha and omega of tourism. The human being, the people generically, is the reason, the cause, and the subject and object of tourism as a development undertaking.

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