

Self-Medication / Over-The-Counter Medicines Purchase Perception and Satisfaction Among Customer – An Empirical Study in Tiruppur District

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I.INTRODUCTION

Consumers today seek the medical shops to purchase self-administered / over the counter medicines in allopathy. Government of India has restricted on the advice from the Indian Medical Council and World Health Organisation has ordered and restricted to sell certain class of medicines without the prescription of a medical practitioner, and few medicines are permitted to be sold without medical practitioner prescription. Consumers' medical bills are sky-rocketing, and also the medical practitioner's bill. Healthcare consumption patterns across the globe have undergone a significant transformation in recent decades, influenced by rising health awareness, accessibility of medical information, and the growing emphasis on self-care practices. Among these evolving trends, the use of over-the-counter (OTC) medicines has emerged as a prominent feature of modern healthcare systems. Self-Medication / Self-Medication / OTC Medicines are pharmaceutical products that can be purchased by consumers without a prescription from a registered medical practitioner. These medicines are primarily intended for the treatment of common ailments such as headaches, fever, cold and cough, digestive issues, minor pain, and allergies. The increasing reliance on Self-Medication / Self-Medication / OTC Medicines reflects a shift in consumer behaviour from traditional doctor-dependent treatment towards self-medication and autonomous health management.

In the Indian context, the OTC medicine market has witnessed considerable growth due to factors such as population expansion, increasing literacy levels, urbanization, and improved healthcare accessibility. Consumers are becoming more proactive in managing

minor health conditions, driven by convenience, cost-effectiveness, and time-saving considerations. The availability of Self-Medication / Self-Medication / OTC Medicines through various channels, including pharmacies, medical stores, supermarkets, and online platforms, has further facilitated their widespread use. Moreover, aggressive marketing strategies, brand positioning, and awareness campaigns by pharmaceutical companies have played a crucial role in shaping consumer perception and influencing purchasing decisions.

Consumer perception towards Self-Medication / Self-Medication / OTC Medicines is a multidimensional construct that encompasses beliefs, attitudes, awareness, and past experiences. It is influenced by several factors such as product quality, brand image, safety, effectiveness, price, accessibility, and information availability. Perception plays a critical role in determining whether a consumer opts for Self-Medication / Self-Medication / OTC Medicines or seeks professional medical advice. For instance, a positive perception regarding the safety and efficacy of Self-Medication / Self-Medication / OTC Medicines can encourage consumers to adopt self-medication practices, while concerns about side effects or lack of knowledge may discourage their use. In this regard, understanding consumer perception becomes essential for assessing the acceptance and sustainability of OTC medicine usage.

Purchase behaviour is another important dimension that reflects how consumers make decisions regarding the selection, purchase, and use of Self-Medication / Self-Medication / OTC Medicines. It includes aspects such as frequency of purchase, choice of brand,

reliance on pharmacist recommendations, influence of advertisements, and preference for generic versus branded products. Consumer purchase behaviour is often shaped by demographic factors such as age, education, income, and occupation, as well as situational factors such as urgency of illness and availability of alternatives. In addition, the role of pharmacists and medical store personnel is significant in guiding consumers towards appropriate OTC products, thereby influencing their purchase decisions.

Customer satisfaction is a key determinant of repeat purchase behaviour and long-term consumer loyalty. In the context of Self-Medication / Self-Medication / OTC Medicines, satisfaction is derived from factors such as effectiveness of the medicine, ease of availability, affordability, clarity of instructions, and absence of adverse effects. A satisfied consumer is more likely to reuse the product, recommend it to others, and develop a favourable perception towards similar products. On the other hand, dissatisfaction arising from ineffectiveness, side effects, or misleading information can negatively impact consumer trust and reduce future purchase intentions. Therefore, evaluating customer satisfaction is essential to understand the overall performance of Self-Medication / Self-Medication / OTC Medicines in meeting consumer expectations.

Despite the advantages associated with Self-Medication / Self-Medication / OTC Medicines, there are several challenges and concerns that need to be addressed. One of the major issues is the risk associated with self-medication, including incorrect diagnosis, inappropriate dosage, drug interactions, and potential side effects. Lack of adequate knowledge and awareness among consumers can lead to misuse or overuse of Self-Medication / Self-Medication / OTC Medicines, which may result in adverse health outcomes. Furthermore, misleading advertisements and insufficient regulatory control over certain products may contribute to consumer confusion and incorrect decision-making. These problems highlight the need for greater awareness, education, and regulatory oversight to ensure the safe and effective use of Self-Medication / Self-Medication / OTC Medicines.

II.IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY (BRIEF STATEMENT)

This study is significant as it examines consumers' perception and satisfaction towards Over-the-Counter (OTC) medicines, providing insights into their awareness, attitudes, purchasing behaviour, and self-medication practices. The findings help identify factors influencing consumer satisfaction, such as quality, affordability, accessibility, effectiveness, and safety. The study also contributes to promoting responsible self-medication by highlighting awareness gaps and potential risks associated with OTC medicine usage. Furthermore, it offers valuable implications for pharmacists, pharmaceutical companies, healthcare professionals, and policymakers in improving consumer education, product development, service quality, and regulatory measures. Academically, the study enriches the existing literature on consumer behaviour and healthcare marketing, serving as a useful reference for future research in the field of Self-Medication / Self-Medication / OTC Medicines.

III.SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study focuses on consumers and patients who purchase and use Over-the-Counter (OTC) medicines in Madathukulam and Udumalpet Taluks of Tiruppur District. The study examines consumers' perception, attitude, awareness, trust, safety concerns, effectiveness, satisfaction, and post-consumption experiences relating to Self-Medication / OTC Medicines. It also investigates factors influencing purchase and consumption behaviour, including brand preference, affordability, availability, pharmacist advice, advertisements, and past experience. Further, the study analyses issues associated with self-medication such as misuse, misleading claims, lack of guidance, side effects, and counterfeit concerns. The findings are based on data collected from respondents during the study period and are intended to provide insights into consumer behaviour and satisfaction towards OTC medicine usage within the selected geographical area.

IV.OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the level of awareness and purchase behaviour of self-medication / over-the-counter (OTC) medications among patients.

2. To inquire the factors influencing patients' choice of self-medication / over-the-counter (OTC) medications, such as price, brand, accessibility, pharmacist advice, and previous experience.
3. To analyse consumer perception towards self-medication / over-the-counter (OTC) medications allopathic medicines brand preference, availability and affordability.

V. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Maria E. Ruiz (2010) examined the risks associated with self-medication and the increasing use of Self-Medication / OTC Medicines. The study found that easy availability and convenience encourage self-medication, but irrational use may result in adverse drug reactions and public health concerns. The study emphasized the need for regulatory control, public awareness, and pharmacist guidance to ensure safe OTC medicine use.

Arya et al. (2012) studied consumer buying behaviour towards Ayurvedic pharmaceutical products. The findings revealed that consumers preferred Ayurvedic medicines due to their natural ingredients, safety, and minimal side effects. Product quality, brand reputation, price, and recommendations significantly influenced purchase decisions.

Holecka et al. (2012) assessed consumer awareness regarding Self-Medication / OTC Medicines and found that demographic factors such as education, income, and occupation significantly influenced purchasing behaviour. Although consumers were familiar with OTC drugs, gaps existed in knowledge relating to dosage, side effects, and misuse risks.

Haya Almalak et al. (2014) investigated OTC medicine use among students during examinations. The study reported high usage of pain relievers due to academic stress. Easy accessibility, pharmacist advice, and media advertisements were identified as major influencing factors.

Honkanen (2013) investigated the impact of brand image on OTC medicine buying behaviour. The study found that strong brand image, trust, familiarity, and previous positive experiences significantly influenced consumer purchase decisions and brand loyalty.

Hyun Cho et al. (2013) analysed determinants of self-medication behaviour. The findings indicated that older individuals and people with chronic illnesses

were more likely to engage in self-medication due to convenience and prior experience. The study highlighted the need for targeted health education.

Artur and Aleksander (2014) studied factors influencing the use of OTC pain relievers and anti-inflammatory drugs. Perceived effectiveness, brand familiarity, accessibility, and pharmacist recommendations were found to be major determinants of consumer behaviour.

Beevi (2014) examined the effectiveness of advertisements on OTC product purchases. The study found that informative advertisements emphasizing product benefits, safety, and usage instructions had the greatest impact on consumer buying behaviour.

Shohel (2014) investigated consumer attitudes, intentions, and brand loyalty towards Self-Medication / OTC Medicines in Bangladesh. The study concluded that positive attitudes, trust, satisfaction, and product effectiveness significantly influenced purchase intentions and brand loyalty.

Susan M. Smith, Knut Schroeder and Tom Fahey (2014) the study evaluated the effectiveness of Self-Medication / OTC Medicines for treating acute cough. The findings showed insufficient evidence to confirm the effectiveness of OTC cough medications, indicating the need for further research before recommending them widely.

Sanjeev, Sharma and Taneja (2015) explored factors contributing to the growth of self-medication. The study identified easy access to Self-Medication / OTC Medicines, rising healthcare costs, convenience, and previous experience as key drivers. The authors emphasized the need for public awareness and stricter regulation to promote responsible self-medication practices.

Chari, Kadeangadi and Mallapur (2015) the researchers examined self-medication practices among urban residents. The study found that self-medication was commonly used for minor ailments such as fever, headache, and cough. Convenience, prior experience, and cost savings were the main reasons for adopting self-medication.

Amy Y. Stanley et al. (2016) studied the use of Self-Medication / OTC Medicines during pregnancy. The findings revealed that many pregnant women used OTC drugs without professional consultation, which could pose health risks. The study stressed the importance of healthcare guidance during pregnancy.

Poonam Narang, Vivek Garg and Anurag Sharma (2016) the study analysed the regulatory, safety, and economic aspects of Self-Medication / OTC Medicines in India. It concluded that Self-Medication / OTC Medicines support self-care and reduce healthcare costs but require stronger regulations, pharmacist supervision, and consumer awareness for safe usage.

Urvashi Davawala and A.P. Singh (2017) The study examined consumer knowledge regarding Self-Medication / OTC Medicines. Although respondents were aware of OTC drugs for minor illnesses, many lacked knowledge about dosage, drug interactions, and side effects. The authors recommended enhanced consumer education and pharmacist involvement.

VI.ANALYSIS

Table 1

AGE	Frequency	Percent
21-30	122	18.7
31-40	114	17.4
41-50	84	12.8
51-60	170	26.0
ABOVE 60	164	25.1
Total	654	100.0
GENDER	Frequency	Percent
MALE	379	58.0
FEMALE	275	42.0
Total	654	100.0
EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION	Frequency	Percent
UP TO SSLC	98	15.0
HSC	96	14.7
DEGREE	81	12.4
DIPLOMA	89	13.6
IT I	129	19.7
NO FORMAL EDUCATION	161	24.6
Total	654	100.0
EMPLOYMENT	Frequency	Percent
AGRICULTURE	139	21.3
PUBLIC SECTOR	101	15.4
PRIVATE SECTOR	109	16.7
SELF EMPLOYED	85	13.0
RETIRED	109	16.7
HOME CARE TAKER	111	17.0
Total	654	100.0

INCOME	Frequency	Percent
UPTO 50,000	72	11.0
50,000 - 1,00,000	200	30.6
1,00,001 - 1,50,000	115	17.6
1,50,001 - 2,00,000	116	17.7
ABOVE 2,00,000	151	23.1
Total	654	100.0
MARITAL STATUS	Frequency	Percent
MARRIED	202	30.9
UNMARRIED	232	35.5
SEPARATED	129	19.7

WIDOW (ER)	91	13.9
Total	654	100.0
AWARE OF SELF MEDICATION / OTC MEDICINE		
	Frequency	Percent
NO	224	34.3
YES	430	65.7
Total	654	100.0
HOW DO YOU PURCHASE MEDICINE		
	Frequency	Percent
SELF-MEDICATION	260	39.8
USING OLD PRESCRIPTION	247	37.8
BASED ON PHARMACIST ADMINISTERED	147	22.5
Total	654	100.0

Data Source: Primary

Table 2

RESPONDENTS ATTITUDE TOWARDS SELF-MEDICATION / OTC MEDICINE						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between People		3032.721	653	4.644	45.513	0.000
Within People	Between Items	71.684	5	14.337		
	Residual	1028.482	3265	.315		
	Total	1100.167	3270	.336		
Total		4132.888	3923	1.054		
Grand Mean = 3.99						

Data Source: Primary

Table 3

RESPONDENTS PERCEPTION TOWARDS SELF-MEDICATION / OTC MEDICINE						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between People		2573.431	653	3.941	8.852	0.000
Within People	Between Items	3.381	4	.845		
	Residual	249.419	2612	.095		
	Total	252.800	2616	.097		
Total		2826.231	3269	.865		
Grand Mean = 4.10						

Data Source: Primary

Table 4

BRAND PREFERENCE – SELF-MEDICATION / OTC MEDICATION						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between People		1667.674	653	2.554	56.239	0.000
Within People	Between Items	6.185	3	2.062		
	Residual	71.815	1959	.037		
	Total	78.000	1962	.040		
Total		1745.674	2615	.668		
Grand Mean = 4.47						

Data Source: Primary

Table 5

PHARMACIST ADVICE - SELF-MEDICATION /OTC MEDICATION						
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	
Between People	2281.944	653	3.495	12.190	0.000	
Within People	Between Items	.307	3			.102
	Residual	16.443	1959			.008
	Total	16.750	1962			.009
Total	2298.694	2615	.879			
Grand Mean = 4.21						
ADVERTISEMENT INFLUENCE – SELF MEDICATION / OTC MEDICINE						
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	
Between People	2218.444	653	3.397	6.235	0.000	
Within People	Between Items	.267	3			.089
	Residual	27.983	1959			.014
	Total	28.250	1962			.014
Total	2246.694	2615	.859			
Grand Mean = 4.21						
PAST EXPERIENCE - SELF MEDICATION / OTC MEDICINE						
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	
Between People	2475.302	653	3.791	18.757	0.000	
Within People	Between Items	.775	3			.258
	Residual	26.975	1959			.014
	Total	27.750	1962			.014
Total	2503.052	2615	.957			
Grand Mean = 4.19						
PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR - SELF MEDICATION / OTC MEDICINE						
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	
Between People	2204.944	653	3.377	12.025	0.000	
Within People	Between Items	.646	3			.215
	Residual	35.104	1959			.018
	Total	35.750	1962			.018
Total	2240.694	2615	.857			
Grand Mean = 4.21						

Data Source: Primary

Table 6

ATTITUDE	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Using Self-Medication / OTC Medicines as self-medication is safe when you use them correctly.	654	4.08	0.927	85.009	653	0.000
Self-Medication / OTC Medicines are convenient to obtain and use	654	4.15	0.954	84.374	653	0.000
Self-Medication / OTC Medicines can be used in pregnancy and breastfeeding but with caution unless stated on the label to avoid.	654	4.09	1.000	78.997	653	0.000
I think I use more OTC medicine, because of availability.	654	4.01	1.051	73.112	653	0.000
I should take Self-Medication / OTC Medicines, when I have minor illness	654	3.89	1.091	67.722	653	0.000

Self-Medication / OTC Medicines are safe, but I would seek a pharmacist's advice if I am not sure about my minor illness and which is suitable for it.	654	3.75	1.074	65.566	653	0.000
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Data Source: Primary

VII.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Age: The age distribution of the respondents indicates that a majority belonged to the older age groups. Respondents aged 51–60 years constituted the largest segment (26.0%), followed by those above 60 years (25.1%). Together, these groups accounted for more than half of the sample, suggesting that middle-aged and elderly consumers were more represented in the study. Younger respondents aged 21–30 years constituted 18.7%, while those aged 31–40 years and 41–50 years accounted for 17.4% and 12.8% respectively.

Gender: The sample consisted of 58.0% male respondents and 42.0% female respondents. This indicates a relatively higher participation of males in the study on self-medication and OTC medicine consumption.

Educational Qualification: A substantial proportion of respondents had no formal education (24.6%), followed by ITI qualification holders (19.7%). Respondents educated up to SSLC (15.0%), HSC (14.7%), Diploma (13.6%), and Degree level (12.4%) constituted the remaining categories. The findings suggest that OTC medicine usage is prevalent across different educational backgrounds.

Employment Status: Agriculture workers represented the highest proportion (21.3%), followed by home caretakers (17.0%), private sector employees (16.7%), retired individuals (16.7%), public sector employees (15.4%), and self-employed respondents (13.0%). This indicates that respondents from diverse occupational backgrounds participated in the study.

Income: The largest proportion of respondents earned between ₹50,000 and ₹1,00,000 per month (30.6%), followed by those earning above ₹2,00,000 (23.1%). Respondents with income between ₹1,50,001 and ₹2,00,000 and ₹1,00,001 and ₹1,50,000 constituted 17.7% and 17.6% respectively, while only 11.0% earned up to ₹50,000.

Marital Status: Most respondents were unmarried (35.5%), followed by married respondents (30.9%). Separated respondents constituted 19.7%, while

widowed respondents accounted for 13.9% of the sample.

Awareness of Self-Medication/Self-Medication / OTC Medicines: A majority of respondents (65.7%) reported being aware of self-medication and Self-Medication / OTC Medicines, whereas 34.3% indicated a lack of awareness. This suggests a reasonably high level of awareness among consumers.

Mode of Medicine Purchase: The findings reveal that 39.8% of respondents purchased medicines through self-medication, while 37.8% used old prescriptions. Only 22.5% relied on pharmacist-administered medicines, indicating a strong tendency toward independent medicine purchasing practices.

Attitude Towards Self-Medication/Self-Medication / OTC Medicines

A repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to assess respondents' attitudes towards self-medication and Self-Medication / OTC Medicines. The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference among the attitude statements, $F(5, 3265) = 45.513, p < .001$. The overall grand mean score was 3.99, indicating a favourable attitude towards self-medication and OTC medicine usage. Respondents generally perceived Self-Medication / OTC Medicines as safe, convenient, and suitable for managing minor illnesses, while also acknowledging the importance of seeking pharmacists' advice when necessary.

Perception towards Self-Medication/Self-Medication / OTC Medicines

The repeated measures ANOVA examining respondents' perceptions of Self-Medication / OTC Medicines revealed a significant variation among the perception statements, $F - (4, 2612) = 8.852, p < .001$. The overall grand mean of 4.10 indicates a positive perception of Self-Medication / OTC Medicines. Respondents generally agreed that Self-Medication / OTC Medicines are safe, effective, reliable in quality, provide quick relief, and are convenient to purchase and use.

Brand Preference towards Self-Medication / OTC Medicines

The ANOVA results indicated a significant difference among the brand preference dimensions, $F - (3, 1959) = 56.239, p < .001$. The grand mean score of 4.47 suggests a strong preference for branded Self-Medication / OTC Medicines. Respondents showed high trust in well-known brands and considered brand reputation an important determinant of their purchase decisions.

Pharmacist Advice towards Self-Medication / OTC Medicines

The ANOVA results revealed significant differences among pharmacist-related factors, $F - (3, 1959) = 12.190, p < .001$. The grand mean of 4.21 indicates that respondents highly valued pharmacist advice when purchasing Self-Medication / OTC Medicines. Consumers generally relied on pharmacists for guidance and trusted their recommendations during medicine selection.

Advertisement Influence towards Self-Medication / OTC Medicines

The analysis showed a significant difference among advertisement-related statements, $F - (3, 1959) = 6.235, p < .001$. The grand mean score of 4.21 suggests that advertisements play an important role in influencing awareness and purchasing decisions related to Self-Medication / OTC Medicines. Respondents acknowledged that media advertisements contribute to product awareness and confidence.

Past Experience towards Self-Medication / OTC Medicines

The ANOVA findings indicated significant differences among statements related to past experience, $F - (3, 1959) = 18.757, p < .001$. The overall grand mean of 4.19 demonstrates that previous experiences strongly influence consumers' OTC medicine choices. Positive experiences encouraged repeat purchases and increased trust in Self-Medication / OTC Medicines.

Purchase Behaviour towards Self-Medication / OTC Medicines

The ANOVA results revealed significant differences among purchase behaviour variables, $F(3, 1959) = 12.025, p < .001$. The grand mean score of 4.21 indicates favourable purchase behaviour toward Self-Medication / OTC Medicines. Respondents commonly purchased Self-Medication / OTC Medicines for minor illnesses and considered convenience and accessibility important factors in their purchasing decisions.

One-Sample t-test

Attitude towards Self-Medication / OTC Medicines

The one-sample t-test results demonstrated that all attitude statements were statistically significant ($p < .001$). The highest mean score was observed for "Self-Medication / OTC Medicines are convenient to obtain and use" ($M = 4.15, SD = 0.95$), followed by "Self-Medication / OTC Medicines can be used in pregnancy and breastfeeding with caution" ($M = 4.09, SD = 1.00$) and "Using Self-Medication / OTC Medicines as self-medication is safe when used correctly" ($M = 4.08, SD = 0.93$). The findings indicate that respondents generally held a positive attitude toward Self-Medication / OTC Medicines, particularly regarding convenience and safety, while still recognizing the importance of pharmacist consultation when uncertain.

VIII. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The demographic analysis revealed that a majority of the respondents belonged to the age groups of 51–60 years (26.0%) and above 60 years (25.1%). Male respondents (58.0%) outnumbered female respondents (42.0%). A considerable proportion of respondents had no formal education (24.6%), and most were engaged in agriculture (21.3%). The largest share of respondents earned between ₹50,000 and ₹1,00,000 per month (30.6%), while 35.5% were unmarried. The study found that 65.7% of the respondents were aware of self-medication and Self-Medication / OTC Medicines, indicating a relatively high level of awareness among consumers.

Regarding medicine purchasing practices, 39.8% of the respondents relied on self-medication, 37.8% used old prescriptions, and only 22.5% purchased medicines based on pharmacists' recommendations.

The analysis of respondents' attitudes towards Self-Medication / OTC Medicines showed a favourable attitude (Grand Mean = 3.99). Respondents generally perceived Self-Medication / OTC Medicines as safe, convenient, and appropriate for treating minor illnesses while recognizing the importance of pharmacists' guidance.

Respondents demonstrated a positive perception of Self-Medication / OTC Medicines (Grand Mean = 4.10), agreeing that Self-Medication / OTC Medicines

are safe, effective, reliable, convenient, and capable of providing quick relief.

Brand preference emerged as an important factor in OTC medicine purchasing decisions (Grand Mean = 4.47). Consumers showed a strong preference for well-known brands and trusted branded products more than unbranded alternatives.

Pharmacist advice significantly influenced OTC medicine purchases (Grand Mean = 4.21), indicating that respondents valued pharmacists' recommendations and guidance during medicine selection.

Advertisement influence was found to be substantial (Grand Mean = 4.21), suggesting that media advertisements play an important role in creating awareness and influencing purchase decisions related to Self-Medication / OTC Medicines.

Past experience significantly affected consumer behaviour (Grand Mean = 4.19). Positive previous experiences encouraged repeat purchases and strengthened trust in Self-Medication / OTC Medicines.

Purchase behaviour analysis revealed favourable consumer behaviour towards Self-Medication / OTC Medicines (Grand Mean = 4.21), with respondents commonly purchasing Self-Medication / OTC Medicines for minor ailments due to their convenience and accessibility.

The one-sample t-test results indicated statistically significant agreement with all attitude statements ($p < .001$). Respondents particularly agreed that Self-Medication / OTC Medicines are convenient to obtain and use ($M = 4.15$), can be used safely with proper precautions ($M = 4.09$), and are generally safe when used correctly ($M = 4.08$).

Overall, the findings suggest that consumers possess positive attitudes and perceptions towards self-medication and Self-Medication / OTC Medicines, with brand reputation, pharmacist advice, advertisements, past experience, and convenience serving as key determinants of purchase and consumption behaviour.

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