

## TOURISM AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: A “CAPABILITY APPROACH” PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

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**Keywords:**

Philosophy of  
Tourism;  
Capability  
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Being Dimension;  
Inclusivity;  
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This study aimed to analyze the relationship between tourism and social justice based on the Capability Approach developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. The research employed an interpretive qualitative method, using data collection techniques such as literature review, document comparison, and case study analysis. Primary data sources consisted of key literature exploring the philosophical concepts of both thinkers, as well as works related to the philosophy of tourism. Secondary data sources included tourism-related data obtained from online sources. The results of the study indicate the existence of access and capabilities in tourism, along with opportunities and challenges, both in enhancing and limiting the capabilities of individuals and communities, particularly in relation to the natural environment, socio-cultural aspects, the economy, and human resources. Criticisms regarding the limitations of surveys and measurements also emerged from the analysis of documents and case studies. These critiques aim to guide tourism studies, from planning stages through to evaluation and oversight, toward employing holistic, comprehensive, and interdisciplinary measurement methods. Thus, it is hoped that universal values of tourism, such as inclusivity and sustainability, can be implemented in the development of the tourism sector.

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### ABSTRAK

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**Kata Kunci:**

Filsafat Pariwisata,  
Pendekatan  
Kapabilitas,  
Dimensi  
Kesejahteraan,  
Inklusivitas,  
Keberlanjutan

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Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis hubungan antara pariwisata dan keadilan sosial berdasarkan perspektif Pendekatan Kapabilitas (Capability Approach) yang dikembangkan oleh Amartya Sen dan Martha Nussbaum. Pendekatan penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif interpretatif dengan teknik pengambilan data meliputi studi kepustakaan, komparasi dokumen dan analisis studi kasus. Sumber data primer mencakup literatur-literatur utama yang mengkaji konsep-konsep pemikiran dari kedua filsuf tersebut dan literatur terkait filsafat pariwisata, sedangkan sumber data sekunder mencakup data-data pariwisata yang diperoleh dari internet. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya akses dan kemampuan pariwisata, serta peluang dan tantangan, baik dalam hal meningkatkan maupun juga membatasi kemampuan individu dan komunitas, khususnya dalam hubungannya dengan alam lingkungan, sosial budaya, ekonomi dan sumber daya manusia. Kritik terhadap keterbatasan survei dan pengukuran juga menjadi hasil analisis terhadap dokumen dan studi kasus yang dieksplorasi. Kritikan tersebut bertujuan untuk mengarahkan kajian-kajian pariwisata, mulai dari tahapan perencanaan pariwisata hingga tahapan evaluasi dan pengawasan,

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agar menggunakan metode pengukuran yang bersifat holistik dan komprehensif serta lintas disiplin ilmu. Dengan demikian, diharapkan nilai-nilai universal pariwisata seperti inklusifitas dan berkelanjutan, dapat diimplementasikan dalam pengembangan sektor pariwisata.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry has the potential to bridge cultural divides, foster economic growth, and promote social exchange. However, the benefits of tourism are often unevenly distributed, with certain individuals and communities facing barriers to participation and exclusion from the benefits of tourism. Number of researches in the latest years had shown and explored these issues (Hall, 2007; Sebele, 2010; Liu et.al, 2023). In the contrary, the philosophical concepts related to tourism such as inclusivity, accessibility, equitable distribution of benefits, has emerged as a critical area of inquiry, emphasizing the need to create tourism experiences that are accessible, equitable, and welcoming to diverse populations.

From a philosophical standpoint, these issues raises fundamental questions about the nature of social justice, equality, and human dignity (McCabe and Diekmann, 2015; Jamal and Higham, 2021). How does tourism impact the capabilities of local communities and marginalized groups? What are the barriers to achieving social justice in tourism? Is there any approach that able to inform policies and practices for inclusive tourism? All these questions reflect the fact that tourism, even highly promoted as tool for economic development, but its social justice implications are still frequently overlooked. In other words, while tourism generates economic benefits, it often exacerbates inequalities marginalizes local communities, and fails to address main issues of justice and inclusivity.

The interaction between industry tourism development and local communities at tourist destination is one of important subject in tourism studies that deserves deeper examination. There are various aspects that raise from that interaction, both to the visitor experience, as well as the well-being of the host community. On one hand, it offers opportunities for cultural exchange, mutual understanding, and economic benefit through local engagement. But on the other hand, it can lead to cultural misunderstanding, social tensions, or even the erosion of local traditions and values, if not managed properly. Therefore, understanding the dynamics of tourist-local interactions is essential for developing tourism practices that are respectful, inclusive and fair benefits for all parties involved.

This research comes with three objectives, first, to analyze the social justice implications of tourism using the Capability Approach, developed by Amartya Sen and expanded by Martha Nussbaum. Second, to explore how tourism can enhance or restrict individuals' capabilities, like access to education, health and security, and cultural participation. Third, to propose recommendations to related stakeholders for making tourism more inclusive, equitable and sustainable. Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach focuses on what individuals are able to do and to be, emphasizing the importance of diversity and empowerment.

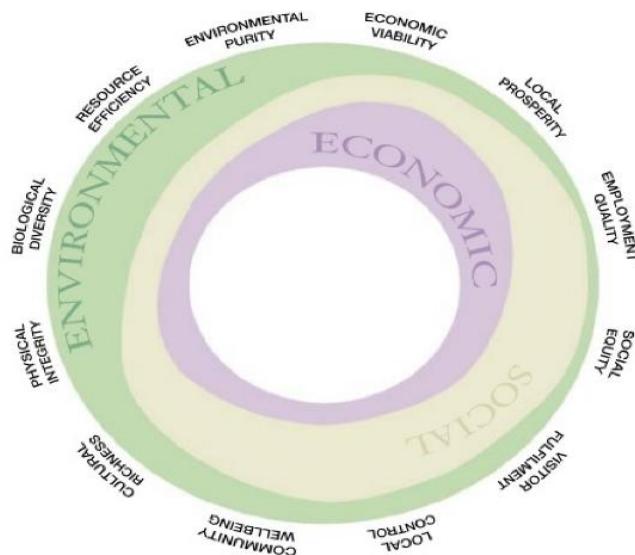


Figure 1. Aims and pillars (dimensions) of sustainability by United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

Source: (Dangi & Jamal, 2016)

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study will employ a qualitative and interpretivist approach (Willis, 2007), integrating philosophical and social justice theory. This normative analysis focused on ethical principles like equity, dignity, sustainability, and inclusivity. Furthermore, conceptual analysis deconstructs key concepts like social justice, inclusivity, and capabilities in the context of tourism.

Data collection involved literature review, document analysis and case studies. Data analyzed using thematic patterns related to capabilities, barriers, and opportunities in tourism, conceptual mapping that applies the Capability Approach to tourism and highlighted pathways for enhancing capabilities, and also comparative analysis of tourism models and its impact on social justice. Alongside with this approach, there are also few limitations which is this study focus on theoretical review that might limit its practical applicability. This study also focusses on specific case studies that also limit the generalizability for broad conclusions.

## III. DISCUSSION

### 2.1 Capability Approach: A Review

Martha Nussbaum's Capability Approach, originated from Amartya Sen, an Indian economist and philosopher, in the 1980s. Sen challenged traditional economic measure like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by arguing that this measurement failed to fully capture human well-being. Sen emphasized "Capabilities" that understood as the actual freedoms and opportunities every human have as a value of life. This concept shifted the focus from mere income or resources to point of what individuals can truly achieve.

Capability Approach by Amartya Sen, in the 1980s, revolves around two main ideas, as it explained in table 1 below:

Table 1. Sen's Capabilities Approach

No	Capabilities	Definition	Meaning and Contribution
1	Functioning	Various things a person can achieve or become, such as being healthy, educated, employed, or participating in community life, as it represents the realized outcomes of well-being	Refer to actual states of existence that individuals value. By focusing on functioning, Sen shifted the emphasis from of abstract economic measure to tangible aspects that directly impact quality of life
2	Capabilities	Range of opportunities or freedoms that individuals have to achieve the functioning, as it represents the real choices available to people	Refer to potential to achieve well-being, not just the outcomes. By focusing on capabilities, Sen highlighted the importance of freedom and agency. Freedom can be understood as the availability of opportunities, while agency can be understood as the ability to make meaningful choice

Sen's work addressed critical issues like poverty, inequality, social justice, and arguing that true progress not just lying on economic measurement, but depends on empowering individuals to lead fulfilling lives. These frameworks had influenced and shaped global development policies by advocating for more people-centered approach development.

Furthermore, in the 1990s, philosopher Martha Nussbaum, built on Sen's work, and adding a stronger ethical and political dimension (Nussbaum, 2011). While Sen's approach was flexible and centered on individual agency, Nussbaum introduced a specific list of central human capabilities that essential for a dignified and flourishing life. This latest version approach known to be more normative, explicit on its ethical and political dimension. Nussbaum list of capabilities, as it explained in table 2, provides a universal basis for human rights and social justice:

Table 2. Nussbaum's 10 Central Human Capabilities

No	Capabilities	Definition	Meaning and Contribution
1	Life	Being able to live a life of normal length, not dying prematurely or having one's life reduced to a level below what is necessary for a dignified existence	Being able to live a normal lifespan based on intrinsic value of life and the importance of policies that protect and sustain human life, such as healthcare, safety, and access to basic resources
2	Bodily Health	Being able to have good health, including reproductive health, adequate nutrition, and shelter	Having access to healthcare systems and nutrition that emphasizes the role of social and economic policies in ensuring physical well-being
3	Bodily Integrity	Being able to move freely from place to place and experience secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence. Bodily integrity also related to having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and reproductive choice	Freedom from violence and control over one's body that advocating for laws and practices of individuals protection, reproductive rights, and gender equality

4	Sense, Imaginations, and Thought	Being able to use the senses, imagination, think and reason, in a way informed and cultivated by education. This capability also include freedom to expression, religion and artistic creativity	Access to education, intellectual freedom and cultural resources that advocating policies that promote literacy, critical thinking, and access to cultural resources
5	Emotions	Being able to have attachments to things and people outside oneself in order to accommodate needed to love, grieve, longing and express justified anger	Being able to form attachments and experience emotions as a dimension of human life especially about human relationship and meaningful connections
6	Practical Reason	Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life	Being able to reflect on and plan one's life that emphasizes the importance of autonomy based on education, critical thinking, and access to information
7	Affiliation	Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interactions and compassion for other	Being able to live with and for others, free from discrimination as it reflects social nature of human beings, such a relationship, empathy, and community. It advocates for policies that foster inclusion, diversity and mutual respect
8	Other Species	Being able to live with concern for and in relation to natural resources (animals, plant and world)	Being able to live in harmony with nature that emphasizes environmental policies that promote sustainability and respect
9	Play	Being able to laugh, play and enjoy recreational activities	Acknowledges the importance of leisure, opportunities for recreation, cultural activities and community events, that value to the joy in human life
10	Control Over One's Environment	Being able to participate effectively in political choices, having right to political participation, free speech and association. Not only political side, but also material, that shown ability to hold property and having freedom from unwarranted search and seizure	Political participation and property rights that emphasizes the importance of political and economic agency through democratic governance, property rights, and fair labor practices

The Capability Approach has become a key framework in fields like economics development, ethics, and political philosophy. Overtime, it's influencing global organizations like United Nations Development Program (UNDP), especially in their Human Development Reports. Her contributions highlight the importance of ensuring every individual has the opportunity to develop their capabilities and making it as a vital tool for promoting social justice and human dignity.

## 2.2 Capability Approach in Tourism and Social Justice: The Application

Tourism, as a social and economic activity, can either enhance or hinder individual's capabilities and freedoms. The Amartya Sen and Nussbaum concept of Capability Approach offer few groundworks, especially for specific form of tourism and sustainability, such as Ecotourism and Community-Based Tourism (CBT). The development of sustainable tourism through CBT, must consider all aspects, as it shown in Figure 2.

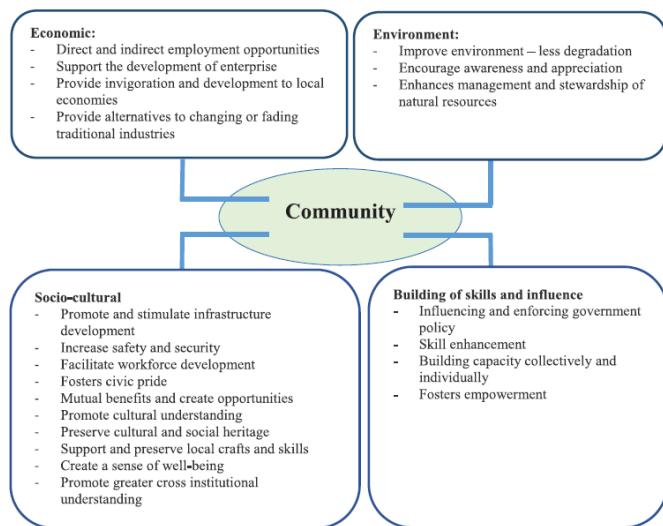


Figure 2. Four Aspects of CBT

In essence, CBT is defined as a form of alternative tourism development that emphasizes the active participation of the community or local society from the stages of planning, implementation, management, monitoring, evaluation, and the distribution of benefits (Schott & Nhém, 2018). There are four aspects that CBT aims to achieve: the aspect of the surrounding environmental ecosystem, the socio-cultural aspect, the aspect of community members' influence and skills, and the aspect of community economic empowerment. Nowadays, the concept of CBT has become popular over the past three decades. This concept is also considered highly suitable for development in developing countries, such as in Asia and Africa. The Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Tourism, has also attempted to adopt and implement this concept to be developed in various places and regions.

Other forms of sustainable tourism are ecotourism. Ecotourism itself focuses on nature conservation and environmental sustainability, especially in protected or fragile ecosystems (Fennell, 2007). There are three indicators of successful ecotourism management, namely the reduction of threats to achieving conservation goals, the generation of income for the sustainability of conservation activities, and the provision of benefits for local community groups. While CBT center prioritizes on community empowerment and cultural preservation by their involvement in decision making and tourism operations, ecotourism often involves collaboration between governments, conservation organization, and private tourism operators, in order to raise awareness about environmental issues among tourists and locals. In other words, at its core, ecotourism seeks to "maximize the positive impacts of tourism while minimizing

its negative effects" (Sugiarto, 2023). This approach aligns closely with the ethical perspectives.

Enhancing Capabilities through tourism at any forms, can be useful to evaluate tourism impact on well-being, particularly for minor-marginalized groups like ethnic minorities, indigenous communities, woman and children, and disabilities (Cole & Morgan, 2010). First, on the economic aspect, tourism can provide income-generating opportunities that enable individuals to achieve economic stability and improve their quality of life. Second, on cultural preservation and pride, tourism can empower communities to preserved and showcase their cultural heritage in order to fostering their own pride and identity. Third, on education and skill development, tourism can create opportunities for education and soft/hard skill-building, such as hospitality skills, guiding skills, language training, or environment knowledge. Fourth, on health and well-being, tourism, especially on its revenue, can fund healthcare infrastructure or programs that improving access to health services for communities. Fifth, on social inclusion and participation, tourism can promote social inclusion by involving marginalized groups in decision making and tourism-conservation activities.

Capabilities Approach also can be useful to addressing few barriers in tourism development. First, inequality and marginalization. This happen because the impact of economic benefits of tourism often bypasses the local communities. Instead of merely generating revenue for external stakeholders, tourism development should initiatives the contribution to the overall well-being of local communities. For example, a study about overtourism in Barcelona, shown that the phenomenon of overtourism that lead to exhaustion of local people and how the majority refuse to accept more tourist and more accommodation (hotels) (Alonso-Almeida et al., 2019). Second, lack of access to education, skills, and resources. This happen because less participation of local communities in tourism planning and development. By emphasize the importance of expanding individuals' freedoms, tourism development must create opportunities for local communities to participate in decision-making, benefit from its revenues, and later able to access to education and training to engage in tourism-related activities.

Third, structure inequalities, such as gender discrimination, poverty, lack of infrastructure, or support facilities. This negative impact happened when communities are not participating enough in tourism development. Fourth, cultural erosion and environmental degradation. This happen because the unsustainability of tourism practice, and so, encourage by Capabilities Approach, tourism in any forms or models should respect and protect local traditions, heritage and natural resources. Zoran J. N. Steinmann, in his paper "How many environmental impact indicators are needed in the evaluation of product life cycles?", stated that there are a vast number of indicators that can be used to assess environmental impacts when considered in relation to the entire life cycle of an organism (Steinmann et al., 2016). Zoran also concluded that it is impossible to conduct an environmental analysis using all of these indicators. Some indicators, however, also can be combined and simplified in order to draw conclusions on environmental issues such as climate change, ozone depletion, land and marine pollution, and excessive land use.

Furthermore, environmental issues are complex and cannot be attributed solely to tourism (Usman et al., 2024). However, over the past few decades, environmental concerns have become a significant focus within the development

of tourism industry. In response, researchers have developed various assessment methods to measure the extent of environmental impacts and how closely these impacts relate to tourism activities. Tourism authorities, at both international and local levels, have addressed criticisms related to environmental degradation by implementing a range of policies, regulations, and strategic approaches aimed at fostering environmentally friendly and sustainable tourism development.

On the other side, this top-down tourism development, more or less play its parts, that excludes local communities from decision-making process and contribute to the unsustainability. Given these circumstances, there is a pressing need to enhance the credibility of environmental impact studies by emphasizing the objectivity of the environmental indicators used. Additionally, there is a growing call to integrate the evaluation of all environmental impacts—whether caused directly by tourism or influenced by related economic and sociocultural factors—into a unified framework.

Integrated approach allows for more comprehensive assessments and informed policymaking that takes all relevant aspects into account. A holistic framework provided by the Capabilities Approach for enhancing, as well as addressing barriers, in tourism development is quite promising. By prioritizing on human well-being, fairness and sustainability, through enhancing the abilities and opportunities of individuals and communities, tourism can transform into inclusive and sustainable growth, rather than being another source of exploitation or inequality.

### 2.3 Challenges and Opportunities

Adaptation of Capabilities Approach to tourism development presents both challenges and opportunities that can significantly influence how tourism is planned, implemented, and evaluated. Below, in table 3, is a matrix that might provide a clear, structured way to compare and contrast key aspects, in order to gain deeper insight and understanding. By addressing these challenges and leveraging the opportunities, tourism can become a force for equitable and sustainable development, benefiting both individuals and communities.

Table 3. Matrix of Challenges and Opportunities

No	Aspects	Challenges	Opportunities
1	Local Capacity	Lack of skills, education and resources that limits participation	Empowers local communities through training, education, and capacity-building initiatives
2	Resistance to Change	Traditional profit-driven tourism models may resist shifting to a capabilities-focused approach	Encourages sustainable and ethical tourism models that attract responsible tourists and investors
3	Cultural Preservations	Risk of cultural commodification and loss of authenticity	Fosters cultural exchange, preserves heritage, and promotes mutual respect between tourists and local communities (host)
4	Profit-Centered Goals	Balancing four aspects in sustainable tourism, especially economic profitability with social and environmental sustainability, can be challenging even difficult to achieve	Encourages sustainable and ethical tourism models that attract responsible tourists and investors

5	Community Empowerment	Top-down development that excludes common goals, especially locals' aspiration	Encourages community-led tourism initiatives, fostering ownership and pride
6	Strong responsibility of related stakeholders	Overlapping tourism management can lead to unclear or uncertainty participation and lead to degradations, instead of sustainability	Attracts funding and support that shown clear and significant effort, also align with global development goals, as well as common goals, of all participated stakeholders

## 2.4 Beyond Surveys and Metrics Measurement

Nowadays, indicators and surveys in tourism, seems to overemphasis on economic metrics that might overshadow the real outcomes of social and environmental. The Capabilities Approach, by Sen and Nussbaum, shifts the focus of development from metric to a broader understanding of freedom and human-well-being. This approach redefines how success is measured on individuals' and communities' abilities to live the values, instead of relying solely on indicators and surveys.

A holistic view of success measured by the extent to which tourism enhance people's freedoms and opportunities. This includes access to education, health, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability. Economic indicators such as GDP, tourism investment, employment rates, tourist arrivals, length of stays, competitiveness index, inclusive scoring, or other form of tourism surveys, are important, but hardly success to capture the full impact of tourism on human well-being. At the same time, it also raises a concern with other related issues such as tourism economic leakage, tourism function as a leading sector, and tourism multiplayer effect, especially on poverty, gender inequality, education, health, natural and human resources. For example, a tourism project, such as CBT or ecotourism, are develop in numbers of participation or involvement and generate high revenue, but still struggle on how to improve its impact to local education or healthcare.

The Capabilities Approach pushing the needs to evaluation of tourism development based on multiple dimensions: a well-being dimension (Voukelatou et al., 2021). First, an economic well-being, not just about number of income generation, jobs creation, and equitable distribution, but also whether these jobs provide fair wages and opportunities for marginalized groups. Second, a social-cultural well-being, that assessing whether tourism revenues are reinvested in local schools or healthcare facilities, or evaluating whether tourism support cultural festivals, protects indigenous knowledge, and local livelihoods. Third, environmental well-being, that measures impact of tourism on local ecosystems and ecofriendly practices. Fourth, empowerment and participation well-being, that assessing whether local communities trust the authorities and able to deliver their own opinion in development and management process, including critics.

Other study shows the contribution of tourism that can be examined both from its income and non-monetary resources. Tourism able to provides both monetary and non-monetary resources, especially for poor people, in order to facilitate their capabilities and achieve functioning (Winter & Kim, 2020). But in the long-term and more sustain development, other study found that the majority of tourism business, especially that related to micro, small and medium sized business, often lack in the capabilities and resources to plan for disaster or crisis (Carty, 2021).

For a practical application, beyond numbers can be understand that every aspect of economic, social, cultural, and environmental, measured by a combination of tools such as surveys, interviews, participatory assessments, sustainability indices, and case studies (Stronza et al., 2022). As in study of tourism, where a transdisciplinary method involves integrating knowledge from multiple disciplines, moving it beyond the limits of any one field, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of a tourism-related phenomena. A combination tools for measurement also need because of the complexities of tourism systems, along with sustainability issues and social impacts, that highlight the importance of incorporating multiple disciplines into a unified analytical framework. Such an approach fosters tourism science rooted in interdisciplinary cooperation, leveraging the expertise and method of various fields to address tourism phenomena in a holistic manner.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Inclusive tourism encompasses practices and policies that allow individuals from all backgrounds, abilities, and circumstances to engage in and benefit from tourism experiences (Biddulph & Scheyvens, 2018). This includes considerations for people with disabilities, marginalized groups, and individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Core values of this issues lying on equity, diversity, sustainability, and empowerment.

Align with these, the Capability Approach, provides a holistic framework for evaluating tourism's impact on human well-being. By focusing on capabilities, functioning, and freedoms, it emphasizes the importance of empowering individuals and communities to achieve their full potential. For tourism development, in order to be truly sustainable, it must prioritize human development, equity, and participation, ensuring that benefits are shared fairly and that local communities retain control over their resources and futures. This approach aligns closely with concepts and forms in tourism development like CBT and ecotourism because these forms offering a pathway for tourism to contribute meaningfully to global development goals.

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