

Organizational Configuration and Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises

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Abstract

This study was designed to harmonize the positions of Miles and Snow, Miller and Mintzberg theories of organizational configuration, and then come up with an appropriate organizational configuration for SMEs. In doing it, on-line published empirical and conceptual articles and reports related to the theories and SMEs' performance were assembled and classified according to SMEs' performance-related, theory-related and both-related and then analyzed. The analysis revealed that, the difference between the theories is a matter of dimension, therefore, relevant components of the theories were drawn and a configuration framework was proposed for SMEs. The proposed model included Competitive, Internal and Corporate dimensions of configuration and overcomes the issues that hinder the adoption of organizational configuration in SMEs. Finally, it was recommended that, researchers should henceforth consider the theories as complementary and design empirical researches to test the validity of the proposed framework.

Keywords: *Organisationnel Configuration, SMEs and SMEs' Performance*

1. Introduction

For decades, organizations have witnessed tremendous changes in the way and manner they are structured and managed (Gaspary, de Moura and Wegner, 2018), hence organizations are today engaged in the key challenge of creating a design that promotes and encourages innovative behavior in their organizations, coupled with organization configurations. Past literature had shown that those organizations structure that are static in their hierarchy, will not provide the necessary flexible and or sustainable organizational competitiveness (Jensen, Johnson, Lorenz and Lundvall, 2007). On this, it is paramount to understand that, for organizations to compete within the context of the complex markets, it is required that it has to be flexible and innovative in its strategies, so as to maintain its level of competitiveness (Schreyögg and Sydow, 2010). Olden traditions in organizations which has to do with traditional designs, may not fit the demand for flexibility and agility in running modern organizations due to its rapid changing context (Gaspary et al., 2018), thus the tradition of the past, had become outdated due to the fact that they do not provide an organizational structure and configuration that promotes cooperation and knowledge sharing among employees (Jensen et al., 2007; Salerno, 2009; Asif, 2017).

Moderns organizations of today, demands those organization structure and configuration that enables innovation, problem solving approach and knowledge sharing (Aleksić and Jelavić, 2017; Colombo, von Krogh, Rossi-Lamastra, and Stephan, 2017; Benzer, Charns, Hamdan and Afable, 2017). Consequently, Organizations that operate in today's dynamic and rapid changing environment must have to deal continued change in their organizational structure and configuration. Further, it is argued that today's contemporary organizations must have to be able to respond to the highly competitive market place by continuously reorganizing its operations in other as to respond to the ever growing rapid changes which challenges the environment (Král and Králová, 2016). Within the context of several factors, organizational structure and configuration had been found to either hinder or boost an organizations capacity in various forms (Dekoulou and Trivellas, 2017).

An organization that promotes an environment that favors innovation especially through structures and configuration, it provides avenues where employees tend to interact with each other and create new form of knowledge, and capacity building that promotes optimal solutions to organizations problems (Joseph, Klingebiel, and Wilson, 2016). As a result of

the tremendous changes, organizations are becoming more concerned to issues of the changing organizational climate internally embedded in the environment which supports knowledge creation and high level of innovativeness (Ren and Zhang, 2015; Naranjo-Valencia, Jiménez-Jiménez and Sanz-Valle, 2016; Valaei, Nikhashemi and Javan, 2017). In the same vein modern organizational theories has emphasized that organizations structures are today becoming more increasingly configured to patterns that are more innovative in configuration (Rhee, Seog, Bozorov and Dedahanov, 2017). Generally, organizational configuration has four dimensions from each of two out of its three theorist, namely, Miles and Snow (1978) and Miller (1987), while the third one Mintzberg (1979), has five dimensions. Miles and Snow identified the prospector, the analyzer, the defender, and the reactor; Mintzberg offered structures for entrepreneurial, bureaucratic, professional, divisional and adhocratic organization which may mean both large and small organization while Miller came up with leadership, environment, structure, and strategy dimensions. It can be observed that, there is no agreement between the above theorists on common dimensions for organizational configuration, talkless of specifying which of the dimensions are relevant to SMEs. This disagreement has found its way and hampered the development of research in the area (Michor, Harms, Schwarz & Breiteneker, 2010). Hence, this article will harmonize the positions of the three theorists, and then come up with an appropriate organizational configuration for SMEs.

Consequently, the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) is a good source of economic growth and development in this new era of industrialization, through its role in employment generation, poverty eradication and redistribution of income. Also the capital and managerial expertise required to run SMEs is virtually not beyond the limited ones obtainable even in most developing countries. This has over the years, attracted international attention for the sector, such that, every country is making efforts to make it vibrant. In this line, Nigerian governments came up with programs such as: Nigeria Bank for Commerce and Industry, Nigeria Agricultural and Cooperative Bank, National Economic Reconstruction

Fund, Export Stimulation Loan Scheme, National Directorate of Employment, Fadama Program, Poverty Alleviation Program/National Poverty Eradication Program, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (Nwankwo, Ewuim & Asoya, 2012). Contrary to the usual contributions of such programs in many countries, Nigerian business environment remains unfriendly for SMEs as a result of poor management skill on the part of owner-managers (Chuta, 2012; Nnodim, 2012). This depicts management as a great problem to SMEs in Nigeria. Although, general management skills and abilities are not unimportant in managing SMEs, their process is unique and cannot be considered to be the same as professional management in LSEs, practiced on a reduced scale, as the multiplicity of roles expected of the owner-manager is not comparable to LSEs' (Welsh & White, 1981; Beaver, 1997). SME, is a case of handling multidimensional phenomena both within organization and between organization and its environment or project that requires fit or congruent relationships and holistic framing where configuration management pattern can be applied (Mavondo, Hooley & Wong, 2003).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Organizational Configuration

The idea of organizational configuration could be traced to the formal structure works of Webber (1947) and Fayol and Configuration Management of US Department of Defence. The idea was later brought into plain by the works of Miles and Snow (1978), Mintzberg, (1979) and Miller (1987) that officially named it Organizational Configuration. Mintzberg's configuration was organizational structure while Miller's own, was a combination of four forces ie leader's personality, environment, strategy and structure that translates organization from idea to result. Configuration Management focuses on establishing, maintaining, and the consistency of a system or product throughout its lifetime (Carnie, 2011). Organizational Configuration in management is simply a combination of two arguments ie organizational structure and system theory. Although, close and open system perspectives may explain it all but organizational structure explains the internal structure better than close system perspective. Taking it from

organizational structure point of view, it means looking at and treating organization as an interconnected structure of units arranged in a pattern that ease realization of goals; that functions as a system not a collection of independent units (Fiss, 2007). It is also the formatting of a single unit (organization) into different sub-units using system approach, such that, all the concerned variables within and outside the unit are considered and connected appropriately. Therefore, configuration approach focuses on how well, an organization's external environment and its internal resources can be arranged and organized for better achievement of goals (Mugler, 2002).

2.2 Theories of Organizational Configuration

The field of organizational configuration has witnessed the emergence of three theories toward the end of 1970s and 1980s. The theories include Miles and Snow's (1978) Configuration, Mintzberg's (1979) Configuration and Miller's (1987) Configuration.

Miles and Snow's (1978) Configuration

Miles and Snow (1978) classified organizations into four classes according to their capacity and attitude towards interacting with their competitive environment as: the prospector, the analyzer, the defender, and the reactor. Prospector organization is identified as innovative, growth oriented, new market searcher and risk taker. In this aspect, all that is needed for the organization to grow are highlighted by giving attention to all the business aspects in a feasibility study. It affirms the need for a clear and concise description of the venture or organization i.e. the target market, the resources needed in the organization and the type of financing. Defender organization is current market protector and stable growth maintainer. It is a concept whereby organizations consider the interests of society by taking responsibility for the impact of their activities on customers, suppliers, employees, shareholders, communities and other stakeholders. This obligation is seen to extend beyond the statutory obligation to comply with legislation and sees organizations voluntarily taking further steps to improve the quality of life for employees & their families as well as for the

local community & society at large. Analyzer is current market and customer satisfaction maintainer with moderate emphasis on innovation. Here, emphasis is given to some extent to the organizations vision simply referred to as the set objectives that organization's wants to achieve in the long term. It clearly indicates the way forward for an organization. Vision clearly answers the question of the founder of the organizations as to what do they want to become or its desired target. Improve operational efficiency by reducing waste production & water usage, increase energy efficiency, selling recycled materials. While Reactor is an organization without clear strategy to change its environment but only reacts to changes in the environment. Government, investors, local communities and suppliers are all putting pressure on organizations to live up to their expectations of the society and the environment. Thus those makes the corporation to encounter new challenges as government regulations, tariffs, environmental restrictions, as such, the reactor serves as one of the strategic tactics that help them to sustain a competitive advantage in the environment.

Organization's strength or weakness in the areas of marketing link, technology and administrative structure determines its choice among the above four strategies (Zahra & Pearce, 1990). Miles and Snow also argued that each ideal configuration is unique in terms of context, structure, and strategy and that, prospector, analyzer, and defender are effective configurations against reactor (Doty, Glick & Huber, 1993). Miles and Snow looked at configuration from the point of what expansion strategy should be adopted by an organization given its relative strength and the dictation of outside environment. In other word, Miles and Snow's configuration is an external smoother or competitive configuration.

Mintzberg's (1979) Configuration

Mintzberg (1979) developed a five organization configuration theory, in which he argued that, organizations fall into five categories, based on organizational structure fitness as determined by the nature of their leadership, operating environment and strategy.

- The entrepreneurial organization which should be relatively unstructured and informal as a result of owner's ability to control it, given less environmental

requirements. Most businesses that fit into this type of structure are small businesses.

- The machine organization (bureaucracy) which is highly formal, structured and centralized because of the leader's inability to control it directly as a result of high environmental requirement. This category mostly used to be large organizations
- The professional organization, which is highly formal and structured but decentralized as a result of leader's inability to control employees of the organization because of their expertise. This category also used to be large organizations.
- The divisional organization: this is also formal and structured but decentralized as a result of the leader's inability to various divisions of the organization because of geographical distance. This category also used to be large organizations
- The innovative organization ("adhocracy") is a new format of organizational structure that is purposely designed to pave way for innovation through keeping very limited formalization, structure and centralization levels. This best fits in small or new businesses.

Furthermore, Mintzberg highlighted that often organizations are found to be differentiated through some basic dimensions which has to do with the key part of the organization, the prime coordinating mechanism and its type of decentralization. On the key part of organization, it forms the basis of the organizations growth, development and success. This is the part of the organization that plays the major role in determining its success or failure. Here, on the aspect of the coordinating mechanism, it forms the nucleus of the organizations coordinating unit, which control the coordinated activities of the organization. On this, the prime coordinating mechanism serves as the major method the organization uses to coordinate its activities. The third dimension is the type of decentralization used in the organization. This is the extent to which the organization involves subordinates in the decision-making process. Here, the organization uses the top down and the down top approach to reach out to the within and outside of the organization. Using the three

basic dimensions i.e. key part of the organization, prime coordinating mechanism, and type of decentralization, Mintzberg suggests that the strategy an organization adopts and the extent to which it practices that strategy result in five structural configurations: simple structure, machine bureaucracy, professional bureaucracy, divisionalized form, and adhocracy. Mintzberg's configuration is all about what strategy can we adopt to smoothen the internal challenges given our level of operation. In other word, Mintzberg's configuration is internal smoother or internal configuration.

Miller's (1987) Configuration

Miller (1987) developed a four imperatives theory of configuration. The imperatives are leadership, environment, structure, and strategy. He argued that the variables are called imperatives because they drive or organize many elements of a configuration; they are the most resistant to change and they must change before an organization can transform into any meaningful form or state. By leadership, it referred to the entrepreneurial qualities of the leader and by environment, it means environmental analysis when combined with structure and strategy, they will lead to success. In what he calls "Historical Sequences among Imperatives" Miller (1987) argued that, the four imperatives change alongside with changes in a firm's life cycle. At birth, a firm is often small and being taken cared by its owner-manager, thereby, its success or failure is a direct result of his entrepreneurial qualities; hence leadership imperative. As it begins to grow, and enter more competitive and dynamic markets, this forces the owner-manager to begin to pay special attention to environmental factor, thus, environmental imperative. At maturity stage, where a firm is relatively large in terms of number of employees and task, definition of roles, authority and responsibility become a stake, as such, structural imperative. According to him, strategic imperative becomes needed only at a revival phase after a time of stagnation or industry transformations. It can be evident that, leadership, environment and structure make up SMEs' configuration according Miller. Miller on his part, viewed configuration from the point of what is the most important corporate resource or combination of corporate resources of an organization that can be used against it challenges given its level of

operation. In other word, Miller's configuration is corporate configuration.

Dimensions of Organizational Configuration According to theories

At this point, it appeared that we can take the dimensions of configuration from the perspective of the above three theories discussed. Thus, against Doty Glick and Huber's (1993) conception that, the theories are competitive such that, one is relevant and one is irrelevant, they are complementary in explaining firm performance.

Competitive Configuration: The Miles and Snow's configuration can be seen as Competitive Configuration because it all about market expansion strategy given an organization's relative strength and the dictation of outside environment especially, competitors. It has prospector, analyzer, defender and reactor as its components.

Internal Configuration: The Mintzberg's configuration can also be termed as Internal Configuration because it attempts to smoothen our internal challenges given our level of operation. In other word, Mintzberg's configuration is internal smoother configuration. It has entrepreneurial, bureaucratic, professional, divisional and adhocratic structures as its components.

Corporate Configuration: The Miller's Configuration on the other part, is corporate one as it concentrate on what inform corporate strategies and how they formulated. It has leadership, environment, structure and strategy as its components.

Concept of SMEs' Performance

Objective measurement of performance in the form of financial reports is the best measurement of business performance but when such records are not in existence as in the case of SMEs, subjective measurement can serve the same purpose (Mahmood & Hanafi, 2013). Owner-managers can be given questionnaire to rate the performance of their enterprises in various dimensions such as sales growth, market share, customer satisfaction profit growth and capital growth on a scale (Joseph, 2009; Apolot, 2012; Endi, Surachman & Djumilah, 2013; Abdulwahab & Al-Damen, 2015). The term performance is seen as those behaviours or actions which are regarded relevant to those goals of the said organisation

in question. They further argued that performance itself cannot be said to be the outcome itself, consequences or the result of behaviors or action but rather performance can be said is the action itself. Thus they argued that performance tends to be multidimensional, i.e. a situation whereby for any specific type of job, there tends to be a number of substantive performance components that are distinguished interms of their intercorrelations and patterns of covariation with other variables.

Concept of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

SMEs sector is one of the areas that are currently receiving academic and policy attentions but up to now differentiating these scales of business from each other defies universal definition (Luper & Kwanum, 2012). Researchers and other interested bodies have looked at the issue base on some specific criteria such as value added, value of assets, annual sales and number of employees (Adebayo, Balogun, & Kareem, 2013). SMEs can be defined quantitatively and qualitatively. In Nigeria, they were defined quantitatively based on employment and total asset excluding cost of land and buildings as: Small enterprises 10 to 49 employees or ₦5 million to ₦50 million and Medium enterprises 50 to 199 employees or ₦50 million to ₦500 million (SMEDAN, 2015). They were also defined qualitatively (in term of characteristics) by Bolton Committee's Report on Small Business (1971) cited in Kuckertz and Mandl (2016) and Abor and Quartey (2010) as an autonomous business with a small market share and being informally managed by owners or part owners. In line with the above, researchers have agreed on SMEs' incapacity to control their operating environment, and their vulnerability to its influences (D'amboise & Muldowney, 1988). In fact, the difference between autonomy and independence is very difficult to be understood unless you come to SME analysis. They are autonomous in terms of choice and decision making but highly dependent on task environmental factors such as: customers, government and suppliers (Anderson & Ullah, 2014).

For instance, large businesses, a times, create or change the pattern of their customers' demand through large investment in advertisement and technology; Indomie Noodle is a typical

example in Nigeria. Again, large businesses in the form of multinational corporations do influence even government decisions world over because of their monopolistic and oligopolistic nature to their customers, while their suppliers are more often than not within their control as they operate as oligopsony or monopsony. These three bendings are beyond SMEs' capacity. Also small size of capital base renders SMEs to operate local management style and short-term strategy (Moeuf, Tamayo, Lamouri, Pellerin & Lelievre, 2016). In short, small size of enterprise, function accumulation, informal leadership and preference for oral communication before written one make it difficult, if not impossible to apply management functions and their principles accordingly in SMEs (Holátová & Březinová, 2013). Thus, the functional components of organizational configuration of LSEs cannot work efficiently in SMEs.

Organizational Configuration and SMEs

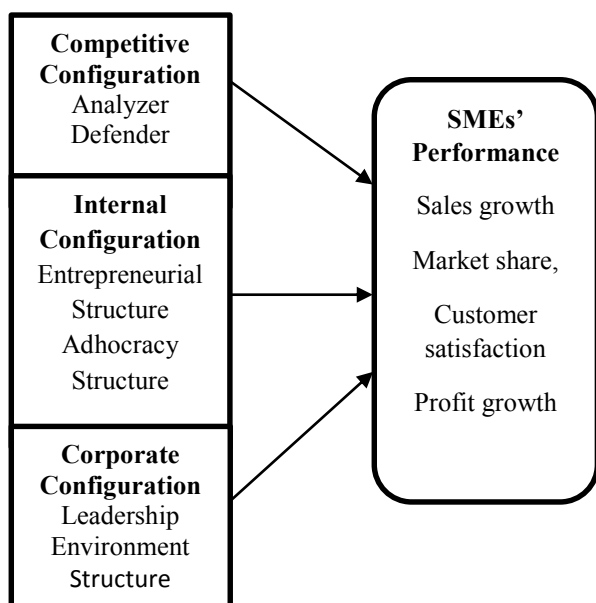
Empirical evidences proved that, Firms classified as defenders perform better when they are relatively small, but firms classified as prospectors perform better when they are relatively large (Smith, Guthrie & Chen, 1989). Reactors are also found to behave like Defenders, at times (DeSarbo, Anthony Di Benedetto, & Sinha, 2005). Also in Mintzberg's Configuration, entrepreneurial and ad-hocratic structures work better in relatively small businesses (Lunenbrug, 2012). And in Miller's (1987), leadership, environment and structure imperatives are required to run a small business. The bottom line of all the theories according to the above review, is organization's life cycle. The firm life-cycle concept suggests an ordering that, at the earliest stage, when an organization is at micro level, it is at reactor strategy using leadership as its sole most important resource on entrepreneurial organizational structure. At this level, it has no market to defend; it has no reasonable capital base to engage in pricing and advert to snatch others' customers, therefore, the leader sit back; watch the activities of competitors and other relevant forces and react accordingly. It is also based on that, there is no uncontrollable number of employees the leader decide everything and inform, command and control every employee on personal basis. Successful reaction can lead to snatching of customers; increased volume of

sale, increased volume of profit and eventually expansion in the number of employees and scope of business, hence, transition from micro to small enterprise.

As it moves to the small enterprise stage, where it accumulates more resources and gain more market share and experience, it changes to defender strategy using a combination of leadership and environmental analysis as its most important resources still on entrepreneurial organizational structure in combination with very little elements of adhocracy. At this stage, it has a snatched market share to defend, and it has a somewhat reasonable amount of resource to use in defending through little advert and pricing activities, therefore, the leader analyzes the environment and escape any fight back from those he snatches market share from. As the number of employees little bit increases, the leader continues to relate with them on personal basis but with a very little form of formalization to reflect the increase (Khaleel & Alkhalidi, 2017). A successful defend will lead to stabilized volume of sale, stabilized volume of profit which will eventually lead to capital accumulation over time that call for more number of employees, hence, transition from small to medium enterprise.

As it moves to a medium enterprise, improved financial and expertise capacity and market positioning makes it to adopt analyzer strategy using combination of leadership, environmental analysis and some aspects of structure on ad-hoc organizational structure. At this stage, the accumulated capital is normally used to finance moderate investment in research and development, training of staff and hiring of experts for innovation to satisfy their customers' changing and increasing demand. Although, the number of employees increases, the leader still continues to relate with them on personal basis in an increased formalization version (Eskelinen, Rajahonka, Villman, & Santti, 2017).

Research Framework



The framework above explains the components of the dimensions of configuration for SMEs. Analyzer and defender strategies are found to be more relevant to SMEs given their strength as well as their attitude toward competitive environment. It also shows that entrepreneurial adhocratic structure make up the components of internal configuration given their size of human and material resources while leadership, environment and structure make up the components of corporate configuration on the account of their corporate need. The components of SMEs' performance comprises of sales growth market share, customer satisfaction profit growth. Finally, the dimensions of the SMEs' organizational configuration are linked up to SMEs' performance with arrows showing how they explain the performance.

3. Methodology

The research is conceptual in nature, where the researcher relied on the postulation of the theorists and the finding of relevant articles and reports. The choice of this method was informed by the research objectives, which is to harmonize the positions of the three theorists of Organizational Configuration and then, postulate a tentative research framework on the relationship between Organizational Configuration and SMEs' performance. A single or little empirical research effort cannot provide enough facts to achieve these objectives, therefore, it appeared easier and

rigorous to assemble all the available relevant articles, reports and theories and base the research upon.

In the first place, on-line published empirical and conceptual articles and reports related to the three theories and SMEs' performance were assembled and then classified according to SMEs' performance-related, theory-related and both-related articles. The SMEs' performance-related were further classified into SME-related and performance-related and discussed respectively. So also, the theory-related were reclassified according to their relationship with the respective theories and discussed. Thereafter, the both-related articles and reports were used to establish connection between organizational configuration and SMEs' performance.

4. Findings

It is found that, the three Theories of Organizational Configuration are complementary in explaining firm performance, as each of the theories represents one dimension of Organizational Configuration. Thus, Miles and Snow's configuration is Competitive Configuration; Mintzberg's configuration is Internal Configuration and Miller's Configuration is Corporate Configuration. It is also found that in SMEs, the components of Competitive Configuration are analyzer and defender; for Internal Configuration are entrepreneurial and adhocratic structures while leadership, environment and structure make up the Corporate Configuration. Often organizations exist in other to achieve there desired goals or objectives. The jobs that led to this are broken into tasks based on jobs attached. Those jobs that are coordinated in the organization are grouped based on departments that are directly responsible in carrying out the said job. Those departments includes but not limited to marketing, sales, advertising, manufacturing. Thus Very early organizational structures were often based either on product or function. Within the context of the organization, the departments are subdivided in to structures which are known as the organizational structure. Those structures give avenue for smooth operation of the organization. Structure is the pattern of relationships among positions in an organisation and among members of an organisation. The purpose of structure is the

division of work among members of the organisation, and the co-ordination of their activities so that they are directed towards achieving the same goals and objectives of the organisation. Structure defines tasks and responsibilities, work roles and relationships, and channels of communication. Structure defines tasks and responsibilities, work roles and relationships, and channels of communication, hence the term organizational structure refers to the formally prescribed pattern of relationships existing between various units of an organization.

The three theories all relates to the key parts of an organization in terms of structure and configuration. The strategic apex is top management and its support staff. In organizations, this is the lower level of the organization and the administrative cabinet or management level staff. The next is the operative core, which forms the workers who actually carry out the organization's tasks. The middle line is middle- and lower-level management, as the name implies, they operate at the middle and at the same time link the top and the lower level of the organization. The techno structures are analysts or professionals such as engineers, accountants, planners, researchers, and personnel managers. In school districts, divisions such as instruction, business, personnel, public relations, research and development, and the like constitute the techno structure. Finally, the support staffs are the people who provide indirect services. They provide such services as maintenance, clerical, food service, busing, legal counsel, and consulting to provide support.

5. Conclusions

Based on the above findings, it is concluded that, the three theories of organizational configuration are no longer competitive, but, complementary in explaining firm performance, with each of the theories representing one dimension of Organizational Configuration. It is also concluded that, in SMEs research, analyzer and defender strategies make up Competitive Configuration; entrepreneurial and adhocratic structures make up Internal Configuration and leadership, environment and structure make up the Corporate Configuration. Organizations exist to achieve goals. These goals are broken down into tasks as the basis for jobs. Jobs are grouped

into departments. Within each department, even more distinctions can be found between the jobs people perform. Departments are linked to form the organizational structure. The organization's structure gives it the form to fulfill its function in the environment

Recommendations

It hereby recommended that, researchers should stop looking at the three theories as competitive in explaining firm performance, but, complementary, and therefore, design empirical studies in this line. It is also recommended that, researchers in SMEs should also design empirical studies to test the validity of the above research framework on components of organizational configuration and SMEs' performance.

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