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## Article

# What do women like? A quantitative study of the female behavior of sparkling wines consumers

Wine Economics and Policy

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*Suggested Citation:* Dornelles, Miriam de Oliveira; Farias, Cláudio; Flores, Shana Sabbado (2022) : What do women like? A quantitative study of the female behavior of sparkling wines consumers, Wine Economics and Policy, ISSN 2212-9774, Firenze University Press, Florence, Vol. 11, Iss. 2, pp. 31-40,  
<https://doi.org/10.36253/wep-10416>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/284532>

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**Citation:** Miriam de Oliveira Dornelles, Cláudio Vinícius Silva Farias, Shana Sabbado Flores (2022). What do women like? A quantitative study of the female behavior of sparkling wines consumers. *Wine Economics and Policy* 11(2): 31-40. doi: 10.36253/wep-10416

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**Data Availability Statement:** All relevant data are within the paper and its Supporting Information files.

**Competing Interests:** The Author(s) declare(s) no conflict of interest.

## What do women like? A quantitative study of the female behavior of sparkling wines consumers

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this paper is to investigate the purchase process of the sparkling wines female consumers, in order to understand the variables that influence the purchase process of this product. The consumer behavior in the purchase decision process is one important topic of the marketing studies, to the extent that it helps to explain how decisions are made and what elements determine them, it can support strategic marketing decisions. The importance of gender segmentation has been highlighted in several studies; in addition, women have made most purchases and their influence in purchase decision has been highlighted. This study uses data from a survey carried out on a representative sample of 1,003 female consumers from Brazil. It was used a five levels Likert scale; Independent tests and correspondence analyses were performed. The study could identify the five main factors influencing the choice. Also, the results contribute to elucidate points such as confidence to choose and consumption occasions and contexts.

**Keywords:** Brazil, consumer behavior, purchasing decision, gender.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The consumer behavior in the purchase decision process is one of the main topics of the marketing studies. The consumer behavior can be defined as a set of physical and mental activities, carried out by goods consumers that result in decisions and actions, such as how to search, choose, purchase and use products and services in order to satisfy a latent need [1, 2]. According to Solomon, consumer behavior is the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, buy, use or discard products, services or ideals to satisfy their needs and desires [3].

When an organization proposes to study consumer behavior, it seeks the purchase's motives, how decisions are made and what elements (internal and external) determine such decisions [4, 5]. Thus, several factors, such as individual differences, environmental influences and psychological processes, can affect purchasing and consumption behavior [6]. This topic is one of the most

complexes of marketing and the work for understanding it stimulates an increasing number of researches in this field.

The importance of gender segmentation has been highlighted in several studies, including online shopping and services [7, 8]. Women are responsible for most of the purchase and an important part in purchasing decisions, which indicate that this segment can be better considered in terms of advertisements, products, marketing strategies and studies.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the sparkling wines, in order to understand what are the variables that influence this product's purchase process. The Brazilian female sparkling wines consumers represented the study group.

The wine production in Brazil was introduced by Portuguese and Spanish in XVI century and was consolidated starting with XIX century due to Italian immigrants' direct participation. The Brazilian vineyards occupy an area of 86 thousand ha, in 6 main regions. [9]. The wine production is concentrated in the south, the State of Rio Grande do Sul gives almost 90% of national production of wines and grape juices, an annual harvest between 600 and 700 million tons. The country has 1100 wineries, mostly small properties, with an average of 2ha [10].

In the international context of wine consumption decline, the official data indicated a 50% increase in the marketing of Brazilian sparkling wines between 2010 and 2018 [10]. The situation was different for the still wine, which fell by 28% in the same period [11]. Another element of interest, in Brazil, is represented by the relation between imported and local wines: official data indicates that 75% of the sparkling wines consumed in the country have national origin, despite only 12% of still wines [12]. This data reinforce the importance of studying the sparkling wines' consumer behavior, providing a better understanding of this rising market, as well as data that can support more effective marketing actions.

This research aims to help marketers, as well as sparkling wine producers, to consolidate the possible guidance of female consumers. It also aims to add knowledge about the behavior and preferences of women in terms of most relevant factors of their decision making at the time of this purchase. A better understanding of female behavior allows the use of market segmentation techniques to highlight specific groups of consumers and the monitoring of purchases [8, 13, 14]. In this sense, the work intends to comprehend different profiles and preferences, contributing to a more effective segmentation of the studied group.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### 2.1 *Woman's consumer behavior*

The transformations experienced in the technological, economic and social environment in recent decades have changed the manner how consumers, in particular females, have been buying. Experts like Peters [15] have advised companies to focus their strategies towards women, as this market segment is an excellent business opportunity for any organization [15]. Women are still a depreciated segment in terms of advertisements and in various commercial groups, even though they represent more than half of the world's population and are responsible for an important part in purchasing decisions [16, 17].

Historically, women have made most purchases. They buy for the family, including products for husband and children, but the last decades have witnessed important changes in the woman's social and professional life [14, 18]. The first changes of the female's role took place in the family, when millions of women were launched into the labor market and left their homes, to spend more time outside [19]. The social change brought by the inclusion of woman into the labor market has a significant role in spending on food, as well as on alcoholic beverages [20].

In terms of buying and consuming behavior, women have been dealing with products considered "masculine". For example, researches prove the influence of the female market in the purchase of vehicles and alcoholic beverages [21]. In the case of wine, researches have highlighted the role of women and the importance of segmentation by gender. In the "Old World" countries, wine consumption has been associated to the men, but to the "New World" women have been increasing the consumption, becoming even more representative than men [22, 23]. Thus, researches indicate that women buy 80% of the wine sold in the USA [24].

The influence of gender on wine buying and consumption behavior has been examined in some prior research. Forbes highlight that even if several studies propose relation between wine attributes and gender, there is lack of consistency in terms of results and practical implications of gender segmentation [21]. For instance, this exploratory and cross-country study about the influence of gender on wine buying and consumption indicates that gender has no significant impact in terms of number and importance of attributes, and little impact on the frequency. On the other hand, the results pointed that women are more sensible by price discounts while men pay attention to region of origin [21]. Otherwise, study based on sociodemographic profiles of wine

consumers indicate that gender is a determinant factor to the frequency of wine consumption [22].

Among the factors considered no buying behavior are: factor of time, economic situation, long term consideration, influence of advertisements, post purchase experience and past regrets related to the purchase [13]. In terms of practical implications to marketing, women like a collaborative, conversational style dialogue. In this sense, advertisements are often more detailed, considering women tend to ask more questions and they have a longer decision process. Also women appreciate very fine distinctions as consequence of being more sensitive, registering higher level of sight, sound and touch [13, 17].

In terms of wine buying and consumption behaviour, women are more to associate wine to the context of consumption while men associate it with convivial and sensorial pleasure. In the moment of choice, women seems to carry more about brandy and previous experience and they are more willing to dialog, seeking information from store personal, sommelier or a server [24, 25]. Labels and shelf tags are also significantly more important for women than man, according to Atkin et al. [24]. These are some findings and indications from previous studies and literature that can provide some orientations to marketing professionals. Overall, it is also important to understand that there are differences inside this large group of “women” and that marketing strategies should consider it into the segmentation’s decisions.

## 2.2 Women and the preference for sparkling wine

In the sparkling wines market, 60% of Brazilian sparkling wines’ consumers are females [26]. In addition to Brazil, in Australia women are the biggest wines consumer, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics; more women than men bought wine [27]. In the United States, study that retrieved data from 2010 to 2016 indicates that 50% of Americans women who consume alcoholic beverages prefer wine, comparing to 18% of men [28].

It is necessary to understand a little more about the female universe, in order to understand these statistics. For example, women can have better tastes and smells than men. Their capacity to distinguish different odors is up to 20% higher than that of men; so, women taste wines more subtlety. They have a better olfactory sensitivity than men and can better understand the complexities of wine [29]. They also feel the subtleties of white wine more often than men [30].

Therefore, the significant differences in wines types are explained by the physical and sensory differences of the different genres. This fact defines preferences, as

white wines tend to have more subtle acidity and lower tannins, while red wines, in most cases, have a lot of tannins. Women’s palates tend to be more sensitive. This may explain why many women prefer white wines, which have more subtle acidity and lower tannins content. On the other hand, within red wines, they find higher tannins content, astringency and bitterness.

Therefore, women prefer less potent wines, because they are easier to consume and to enjoy; consequently, they are more likely to consume white and sparkling wines than men [24, 29, 31, 32]. Men tend to look for red wine and women for delicate wines [30, 33]. A study of Australian wine consumers found that women are more likely to drink sparkling and white wines [32]. Similar results were found in a Canadian study [34]. Also, women consume significantly more white wine than men [29].

There are several academic studies on wine consumer behaviour in countries such as the United States, Portugal, England, France, New Zealand, Peru, Australia [29, 35–40], however, there are few studies that focus their aim on women who consume sparkling wines. Unfortunately, the role of women as wine buyers is often poorly understood and underestimated; gender-specific segmentation is therefore an important issue in wine marketing [41].

## 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 3.1 Research design

This study is based on quantitative approach, collected quantitative data from individual respondents using on-line survey. The questionnaire was developed and refined during a two-phased pre-testing approach. In the first phase, the construct validity was checked by 3 expert participants. The identification of participants’ names and characteristics are reserved in order to preserve confidentiality commitments. The experts were two women and one men, age between 30-40, with research in customer behavior, wine management and wine marketing. In the second phase the questionnaire was pilot tested, being possible to correct some problems arising from the consumer’s interpretation, as well as technological problems.

A non-probabilistic sampling research was carried out for convenience, with female consumers of sparkling wine in Brazil (state of Rio Grande do Sul, RS), using survey online. Data collection included 1,003 women who consume sparkling wine and live in Brazil (RS). The final sample had 1000 answers, 3 questionnaires were discarded due to inconsistency. The data collection covered the period from March 26 to April 26, 2018.

The questionnaire had 31 questions, seeking to find the variables that influence the decision making at the time of purchase. The variables were divided in 3 blocks: socioeconomic characteristics, consumption characteristics and behavioral aspects. The information on socioeconomic and consumption characteristics was collected using mainly categorical questions.

Behavioral aspects were measured in this study using five-point Likert scales. The main observed aspects were: the recommendation, the consumption on special dates, the daily consumption, the preference for organic and the difficulty in sparkling wine selection. The choice of the five-point scale was based on the fact that it is metric accurate and, at the same time, easier and faster to use than other types of scales (shorter or longer, as is the case of the three and seven points scales). Different studies have been carried out to support such a decision [42].

The collected data were organized and analyzed using Excel. The analysis initially used descriptive statistics, including the frequency distribution, the mean and the standard deviation. Cross-analysis was performed for better understanding the consumption and purchasing behavior, using the  $\chi^2$  independence test, with significance being tested at the 0.01 and 0.05 levels. This test shows whether there is a relationship between sociodemographic aspects or consumption frequency and other variables that indicate habits and consumption preferences. The evaluated aspects were found to be reliable when tested, with a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of 0.780.

### 3.2 Data analysis

The sociodemographic characteristics of all respondents are shown in Table 1.

Regarding the age group, it can be noticed a concentration, well distributed among the segments, between 26 and 50 years old, summing just over 73% of the studied group. This finding corroborates with the previous consulted data, which indicated that sparkling wines represent an attraction for all ages, concentrating a large part of their consumption among the population between 25 to 64 years old, but are common in all groups [10].

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Consumption characteristics

Table 2 summarizes Consumption characteristics from the sample analysis.

**Table 1.** Socioeconomic profile of sample group.

Variable	%
<i>Age (years)</i>	
18-25	14.1
26-33	26.6
34-40	26.1
41-50	20.9
51-64	11.6
65+	0.7
<i>Education</i>	
Post-graduation (Specialization, Master or PhD)	39.6
Complete Higher Education	25.4
Incomplete Higher Education	22.9
High school	11.2
Elementary School	0.9
<i>Occupation</i>	
Employee in the private sector	29.0
Public functionary	26.6
Freelancer or independent professional	22.8
Businesswomen	7.4
Trainee	5.0
Unemployed	9.2
<i>Revenue (US\$)</i>	
Under 850	27.0
850-1700	32.1
1700-2850	14.1
Over 2850	8.6
No information	18.2
<i>Marital status</i>	
Single	29.7
Stable Union/Married	46.0
In a relationship	16.8
Separated or divorced	5.8
Widow	1.7
<i>Children</i>	
Yes	52.8
No	47.2

On terms of sparkling wine type, the Muscatel is the most consumed, with 39,2%. Such preference corroborates with the literature: women prefer delicate and less potent wines, since muscatel has a higher sugar content comparing to other sparkling wines [24, 30, 33] [24, 30, 33, 43]. However, it is interesting to note that brut and brut rosé are the segments with the highest consumption after muscatel, summing 22.8% and 18%, respectively, while demi sec is only in fourth place with 14.2%. This data indicates that the relationship between women and sugar content is not linear, which means that women

**Table 2.** Consumption characteristics.

Characteristic	%
<i>Type</i>	
Brut	22.8
Brut Rosé	18.0
Demi sec	14.2
Muscatel	39.2
Pro Secco	2.9
Nature	2.4
<i>Season</i>	
Summer	84.1
Spring	32.5
Autumn	24.9
Winter	21.9
<i>Frequency (glasses/month)</i>	
1-2	33.6
3-4	22.7
4-6	19.4
7-10	11.4
10+	12.9
<i>Place of purchase</i>	
Border and free shops	27.3
Cellar and specialized stores	20.1
Directly from producer/wine maker	11.9
Pubs and bars	10.8
Restaurants	6.0
Internet and online purchases	4.6
<i>Place of consumption</i>	
Residence	80.6
Family events	36.4
Social events	33.2
Pubs and bars	15.7
Restaurants	5.2
Trips	4.3

would prefer sweeter sparkling wines. If added the brut category (white and rosé), it is obtained a higher value than muscatel. In addition, both brut have values higher than demi sec, the second category in sugar content.

Regarding the season, the women consume sparkling wines particularly during summer, summing 84% of the total. Therefore, the higher the temperatures are, the greater the consumption of sparkling wine by women is. It is important to add that although Brazil is known for being a tropical country, the research was carried out in the southernmost state of the country, which has a humid subtropical climate, with well-defined seasons. Another aspect to note is that summer is also the period of the Christmas and New Year cel-

ebrations, which are moments identified with the consumption of sparkling wines in general.

In terms of frequency, the average was calculated for all year long and not for the months or for the period of consumption. The concentration in the lower segments (just over 56% consume up to 4 glasses per month) reflects the national trend, with an average annual wine consumption of 1.9 l/per capita [44]. The relation between frequency and other variables regarding consumption factors is presented below.

In terms of place of consumption, the participant's or her partner's residence was indicated by more than 80% of the studied group, which is quite representative. Family and social events are in the second place. They represent together almost 70% of the participants, reinforcing the idea of a relation between sparkling wine and festive moments. The lack of representativeness of commercial establishments, such as pubs and bars (15.7%) or restaurants (5.2%) drew attention and it can be explained by values, availability or package. Such hypotheses can be tested in future works.

#### 4.2 Purchase factors

Women were asked about the factors that most influence the sparkling wine choice, having the possibility to choose up to 3 alternatives. Table 3 summarizes the results.

The main factors that influence consumption are taste, having tasted sparkling wine before, brand and someone's recommendation, which corroborate with

**Table 3.** Factors that most influence the choice.

Factors	%
Flavor	49
Having tasted the sparkling wine before	41
Brand	39
Someone's recommendation	35
Price	33
Sparkling wine's origin (region or country)	19
Promotional highlight in shops	17
Medals and awards	8
Have read posts / comments on the Internet / Social Networks	5
Information on the back label	3
Packages and Accessories (glasses, boxes)	3
Having read about the sparkling wine in a guide	3
Alcoholic Content	2
Attractive front label	1
The sparkling wine being organic	1
Information on the shelf	1

results found in literature. For example, the results of a research carried out in Portugal showed that the most valued factors at the time of purchase are the price, the origin region and the friends' and family's recommendation [40]. A cross-country study in four countries already showed that the main factors influencing female consumption were the price, the type, have/having tasted the wine, applied discounts, the variety and the brand [21]. However, the price is the first attribute in both studies, but does not apply in present research, where price is ranked on 5th place.

For women, having tasted the wine before has more weight at the time of decision [45]. In addition, women use the friends' and family's recommendation and their own knowledge as their main strategies to reduce the risk when buying [40]. Thus, the research showed the women's priority in appealing to their prior knowledge to support the purchase decision, this factor being even more important than the price.

Sparkling wine's origin (region or country) was the 6th factor in purchase decision. Previous studies pointed out that men were more concerned with origin than women, which can't be confirmed in this study [46–48]. Even if research findings have not always been so conclusive, this point is a lack to be explored in further studies.

#### 4.3 Behavior aspects

The influence of age on the sparkling wine consumption frequency was the first behavioral aspect analyzed. The relationship was validated through a X2 independent tests. Table 4 presents the results.

Regarding age, the choice of different products and services is linked to this characteristic, as there is a change in habits and new expectations arising from maturity [49]. A premise found in the literature of this study area is that the frequency of consumption increases with the woman's age [29, 50, 51]. Analyzing the data, it can be noticed that the quantity of 1 to 2 glasses drops, while the consumption of 7 to 10 glasses per month increases, as the age advances.

In a qualitative research carried out in Portugal, based on an in-depth interview with 15 women aged between 23 and 35 years old, it was revealed that the majority of the interviewees increase the frequency of consumption with age. Women said they felt more comfortable drinking wine and wanting to try new wines. Other women revealed that consumption remained constant and increased in quality and not necessarily in quantity [40]. The hypothesis of increased quality was tested, considering quality as a synonym for willingness

**Table 4.** Influence of the age group on the frequency of consumption (% of consumers).

	Frequency (glasses/month)					X <sup>2</sup>
	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-10	Over 10	
18-25 y	40.7	15.0	27.1	10.0	7.1	47.96
26-33 y	40.8	19.5	23.2	7.1	9.4	
34-40 y	29.0	15.6	24.4	13.7	17.2	
41-50 y	26.2	21.9	21.0	14.3	16.7	
51-64 y	31.6	29.8	15.8	11.4	11.4	
Over 65 y	28.6	14.3	28.6	28.6	0.0	

Note: n=1000; Significant at 1 per cent level.

to pay higher prices, and validated through a X2 independent test. There is evidence of a relationship at 5% significance between age and quality (higher prices).

Another aspect analyzed was the consumption on special occasions or daily. The instrument proposed that consumers position themselves in two antagonistic statements - the first showing the sparkling wine consumption more daily and the second relating the sparkling wine consumption only to special occasions. As it can be seen in table 5, both statements had a high degree of disagreement, which means that the sparkling wine consumption does not occur only on special occasions, but also that it does not happen more daily.

The association between sparkling wine and celebration moment can be seen in this research, since more than 67% of women disagree that they consume more on a daily basis. On the other hand, the research also identified a new behavior - the sparkling wine consumption also on a daily basis - indicated when more than 72% disagree that they only consume on special dates. Thus, it can be observed that the relationship between sparkling wines and special dates occurs again, but that the sparkling wine is also part of other moments.

#### 4.4 Sparkling wine choice

One of the results that surprised the most in the research was in relation to the decision to buy or to choose the sparkling wine. Women were asked about the level of knowledge of sparkling wines and who made the decision to buy or to choose the sparkling wine. Tables 6 and 7 present the results.

Previous studies indicated that choosing a wine is a difficult and uncomfortable activity and that self-confidence would be an aspect to consider supporting the decision-making process [50, 52]. The results of this research do not indicate any evidence that the task of

**Table 5.** Special occasions or daily consumption (% of consumers).

	<i>Likert scale</i> ("strongly disagree" to "strongly agree")					Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	
Consumption just on special dates	48.9	23.4	12.9	8.4	6.4	2.0
Daily consumption	40.6	26.9	15.0	7.7	9.8	2.2

Note: n=1000.

choosing sparkling wine is difficult to be accomplished for women. Even though more than 78% consider themselves to have little knowledge about sparkling wines, more than 65% disagree with the statement that choosing a sparkling wine is a difficult task.

On the other hand, the studies also show that younger women are more likely than men to be influenced in their purchasing decisions by family, friends and other third parties [29]. This trend can also be seen in the present study. The influence of the age group on the purchase decision is significant and validated through a X2 independent test, significant at 1 per cent level (Table 8).

A greater influence of third parties on younger women can be seen, although in all age groups the majority of women claim to make the purchase decision. The partners and the family are the main influencers for the youngest. The influence of the family decreases and the participation of friends increases between 26 and 50 years old.

**Table 6.** Level of knowledge of sparkling wines (% of consumers).

Characteristic	%
Expert	1.0
Very Good	4.2
Good	16.1
Week	39.2
Medium	34.7
Null	4.8

In an overview, when it comes to make the decision of which sparkling wine to buy, about 73% of women make this choice. This result contradicts previous studies which find that women deliberately give up responsibility for the purchase of wine in several situations of public purchase and consumption [29, 36]. In this regard, the present research shows a group of consumers who make the purchase decisions, not transferring this choice to partner or family members.

### 5. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

When an organization proposes to study the behavior of women in relation to a specific product, it is necessary to understand that they have gone through and continue to go through several social changes. The

**Table 7.** Confidence in the sparkling wine purchase decision (% of consumers).

	<i>Likert scale</i> ("strongly disagree" to "strongly agree")					Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	
I consider choosing a sparkling wine a difficult task	37.1	28.3	17.0	11.7	5.9	2.2

Note: n=1000.

**Table 8.** Who chooses sparkling wine by age group (% of consumers).

	18-25 y (14%)	26-33 y (26.7%)	34-40y (26.3%)	41-50 y (21%)	51-64 y (11.3%)	Over 65 y (7%)	X <sup>2</sup>
Me	55.7	76.0	77.6	74.8	74.3	57.1	61.19
Friends	5.7	6.7	6.5	10.0	7.1	14.3	
Partner	17.1	10.1	11.4	11.4	9.7	0.0	
Family	18.6	5.6	4.2	3.3	8.8	28.6	
Waiter or Salesmen	2.1	0.7	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	
Others	0.7	0.7	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	

Note: n=1000; Significant at 1 per cent level.



insertion of women on the labor market influenced the most the beverages market and provided greater financial independence and increased social participation at events, clubs and restaurants. Thus, it transformed the lifestyle of modern women and stimulated the consumption of drinks, especially sparkling wine.

This study was based on a convenience sample and limited to a wine producing area. Further studies can expand the sample and test the findings in other contexts. Also, this study had an exploratory approach and future research can use established consumption scales. In addition, this study was based on a female sample; further studies can include a comparison between women and men in the same analytical basis.

It is important to highlight that data collection was carried out in 2018, before pandemic scenario. In our analysis the pandemic does not change the main conclusions, to the extent that it contributes to increases consumption and not the factors of choice, according to local marketing research.

This research showed that women have no difficulty with choosing the product and do not find it a complicated task. They do prefer to choose the product, not leaving this decision to a partner, boyfriend, friend or family member. Women choose and they are not influenced by them either; simply, they choose for them. Major influencers in consumption were not observed, excepting their own will. Also, it was a surprise that the price was not the most important influence on this product's consumption, as imagined.

The most interesting information for sparkling wine producers is that there is a market potential that differentiates daily consumption and consumption on special dates. Women assume that they not only consume on special dates, but also, that they do not consume more on a daily basis than on special occasions. This is very important, as sparkling wine has always had the stigma of being a seasonal product.

Further studies are needed. In addition to gender issues (an important theme and still little explored), other elements need to be unveiled, including understanding whether there is an economic divide, which helps to better understand the behavior of these consumers. Also, understanding the influence of local culture on these consumption habits becomes imperative. We hope that this study will serve as a stimulus for such research.

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