

Argun, Hilal; Baxter, Katherine; Ni, Anna Kyawt; Poo, Mark Ching-Pong

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Article

When Money Gets Tight: How Turkish Gen Z Changes Their Fashion Shopping Habits and Adapts to Involuntary Anti-Consumerism

Hilal Argun , Katherine Jane Baxter ^{*}, Anna Kyawt Ni  and Mark Ching-Pong Poo 

Liverpool Hope Business School, Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool L16 9JD, UK; 22011082@hope.ac.uk (H.A.); nia@hope.ac.uk (A.K.N.); poo@hope.ac.uk (M.C.-P.P.)

^{*} Correspondence: baxterk@hope.ac.uk

Abstract

This study explores how Turkish Generation Z adapts their fashion consumption behaviours in response to economic crises, particularly focusing on involuntary anti-consumerism. Through a qualitative methodology using semi-structured interviews and purposive sampling, the research captures the coping strategies and emotional experiences of young consumers in Türkiye. A thematic analysis of fifteen interviews reveals an original “8Rs” framework—Reject, Restrict/Reduce, Reuse/Reclaim, Re-find, Reconsider, Re-framing Discounts, Re-direction of Resources, and Emotional Responses—that illustrates both behavioural and psychological adjustments under financial strain. Notably, the study introduces two novel concepts: “recession rush,” a calculated urgency to purchase before price hikes, and “re-direction of resources,” the reallocation of budget from other categories toward fashion purchases. By focusing on a geographically underrepresented context and a pivotal consumer segment, this research contributes new insights to the literature on anti-consumption, economic adaptation, and youth identity expression in crisis economies.

Keywords: anti-consumption; Gen Z; Fashion consumption; economic crisis; alternative shopping methods; Türkiye



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1. Introduction

Fast fashion extends beyond transactional consumption, reflecting and embodying various aspects of a person’s identity, such as personality, appearance, and self-confidence. It is an integral part of individual lives, not easily separable. A lucrative industry valued at nearly USD 2.5 trillion globally (Fashion United, n.d.), fast fashion offers accessible products, options, and style inspiration at relatively low prices (Ozdamar-Ertekin, 2016; Blazquez et al., 2020). However, it also comes with significant drawbacks, including labour exploitation and environmental pollution (Shirvanimoghaddam et al., 2020).

Despite these negative impacts, the demand for fashion remains strong. Clothing serves as a basic necessity and a means of expressing identity, style, ideas, and lifestyle. Buying and wearing clothes can be a symbolic decision-making process, reflecting one’s overall identity and perspective (Gökçe Arpa, 2022). Investing in clothing becomes necessary to achieve this desired identity (Serdar, 2012). Among all generations, Gen Z members are particularly inclined to express their personal identities through their consumption choices (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

This research contributes to the literature in two ways: by offering insights into the purchase decisions of Gen Z within the framework of anti-consumption in the fashion industry and by exploring this generational cohort with growing buying power from the understudied country of Türkiye. Aware of their consumer purchasing power for brands, these young consumers express their values and beliefs through their buying choices, often making more informed and deliberate decisions (Yoon et al., 2020). This can lead some to adopt anti-consumerism approaches, practices, or patterns.

The anti-consumerism approach has two dimensions: voluntary and non-voluntary (Albinsson et al., 2010). Voluntary anti-consumerism is motivated by personal beliefs or internal reasons, such as values, environmental concerns, or a sense of belonging (Gökçe Arpa, 2022). Non-voluntary anti-consumerism is forced upon individuals due to external factors, such as socioeconomic reasons like poverty or limited product availability (Makri et al., 2020; Leipämaa-Leskinen et al., 2016), or economic crises (Alimen & Bayraktaroğlu, 2011; Faganel, 2011).

This distinction is crucial in times of economic instability, when people's buying choices are shaped less by ethical beliefs and more by the need to adjust to limited financial resources. Voluntary anti-consumerism involves a conscious choice to reject consumerist values, whereas non-voluntary anti-consumerism demonstrates how external pressures—such as a national economic crisis—can alter people's consumption habits, even if they do not intend to. Recognising this forced shift is key to understanding what consumers experience in these challenging conditions.

1.1. Country Background

Many countries have experienced economic crises throughout history. Türkiye, with its history of financial instability, is a prominent example. The country has faced over ten major crises since the Great Depression, resulting in severe economic and social consequences for the population (Ceylan & Kirgiz, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these challenges following the 2018/19 economic crisis (Aksoy Khurami & Özdemir Sarı, 2022), leading some individuals to become involuntary anti-consumers (Ceylan & Kirgiz, 2020).

Repeated and severe economic crises in Türkiye provide a clear example of how financial hardship can lead to involuntary anti-consumerist behaviour. This is particularly evident among Gen Z, a generation typically associated with self-expression through consumption. The restrictive economic conditions force shifts in their consumer behaviour, not as a matter of choice, but as a response to necessity. Focusing on Gen Z in this context is theoretically significant, as it reveals how structural economic pressures can disrupt consumer identities shaped by values of individualism and expressive consumption.

Economic crises are often a primary motivator for anti-consumerism, as confirmed by existing literature (Ozdamar Ertekin et al., 2020; Alimen & Bayraktaroğlu, 2011; O'Neill & Xiao, 2012; Ceylan & Kirgiz, 2020). Research also explores the relationship between fashion and anti-consumerism (Yoon et al., 2020; M. S. Lee et al., 2017). Ozdamar Ertekin et al. (2020) investigated how the 2018 economic crisis affected the fashion consumption choices, feelings, and alternative consumption practices of the Turkish people. However, there is a significant research gap regarding the fashion consumption habits of Generation Z during economic crises. This study aims to fill this gap by focusing on this specific sociodemographic. Understanding Generation Z's consumer behaviour during financial challenges is crucial for Türkiye, given its history of economic instability and the generation's potential to impact consumption (Gümüş, 2020). Specifically, by examining how Türkiye's economic instability influences Gen Z's fashion consumption, this study moves beyond theoretical discussions of anti-consumerism to explore its non-voluntary form in close detail. This focus enables the exploration of how a generation, renowned for its strong consumer identity,

navigates external financial constraints, potentially leading to widespread non-voluntary anti-consumerist practices in a crucial aspect of their self-expression: clothing.

1.2. Developing the 8Rs Framework

This study proposes the 8Rs typology of involuntary anti-consumption as a conceptual tool for understanding how financially constrained consumers—specifically Turkish Gen Z—adjust their fashion consumption behaviours during prolonged economic crises. It builds upon foundational models such as the 3Rs (Reject, Reduce, Reuse) by [Black and Cherrier \(2010\)](#), as well as the expanded “Reject, Restrict, Reclaim” model by [M. Lee et al. \(2011\)](#). The current study extends these frameworks by incorporating additional behavioural and emotional strategies observed in constrained environments, including those identified by [Leipämaa-Leskinen et al. \(2016\)](#) and [Ozdamar Ertekin et al. \(2020\)](#). The 8Rs—Reject, Restrict/Reduce, Reuse/Reclaim, Re-find, Reconsider, Re-framing Discounts, Re-direction of Resources, and Emotional Responses—capture a broader spectrum of both practical adaptations and psychological negotiations during economic hardship.

Notably, this study introduces two original constructs: “Re-direction of Resources,” which refers to reallocating spending from non-essential categories (e.g., leisure, books) toward fashion-related purchases ([Ruppert-Stroescu et al., 2015](#)), and “Recession Rush,” a calculated urgency to buy ahead of anticipated price inflation. While some components, such as reconsideration and re-finding, draw from earlier work (e.g., [Ozdamar Ertekin et al., 2020](#)), their articulation within the 8Rs typology reflects the non-voluntary, crisis-driven context of Türkiye’s economic landscape. This typology contributes theoretically by offering an empirically grounded framework that connects economic constraint, identity expression, and adaptive consumption behaviours, and can serve as the basis for future model-building in anti-consumption research.

As such, the research question is formulated as follows: “in an economic crisis, how do Turkish Gen Z adapt their consumption practices, particularly for clothing, and how do they perceive these changes?” To address this question, our research aims to achieve the following objectives. First, we will compare pre- and post-crisis consumption patterns. This objective seeks to identify the coping mechanisms and strategies that Turkish Gen Z members have developed during the economic crisis. Second, this study analyses changes in clothing shopping behaviour to understand how consumers’ behaviours have evolved concerning clothing purchases. Third, we offer suggestions to stakeholders in the fashion industry, providing recommendations for businesses operating in the sector. Lastly, this study aims to explore young consumers’ perceptions of the current economic situation. This objective will help brands and entities tailor their communications to resonate with consumers’ emotions.

2. Literature Review

Understanding how consumers respond to crisis-driven constraints requires engaging with the broader literature on anti-consumption. This body of research examines the motivations, typologies, and behaviours associated with rejecting or limiting consumption, whether voluntarily or due to necessity. Given the increasing relevance of economic hardship across global markets and the rise in identity-driven cohorts such as Generation Z, it is essential to distinguish between different forms of anti-consumption and examine how they manifest under specific contextual pressures. The following sections review key concepts in the anti-consumption literature, with particular attention to voluntary versus non-voluntary frameworks, the role of economic crisis, and emerging insights into Gen Z behaviour.

2.1. Voluntary and Non-Voluntary Anti-Consumerism

While consumer research has historically concentrated on the positive aspects of the consumption journey, recent global disruptions have intensified scholarly interest in anti-consumption (M. S. Lee et al., 2009b). Anti-consumption does not imply a complete absence of consumption but instead denotes intentional resistance to or reduction in consumption (M. S. Lee et al., 2009a). Iyer and Muncy (2009) classify anti-consumption along two primary dimensions: the object (whether it targets general consumption or specific brands/products) and the purpose (which may stem from personal motives such as minimalism, or societal concerns such as environmental degradation).

Within this conceptual space, several typologies have emerged. Black and Chierier (2010) describe three core behaviours in sustainability-oriented anti-consumption: reject, reduce, and reuse. Similarly, M. Lee et al. (2011) propose a framework comprising reject, restrict, and reclaim. The distinction between 'restrict' and 'reduce' is subtle but meaningful—both indicate the intentional limitation of consumption, while 'reclaim' entails repurposing or re-framing the function of owned items beyond their original use.

Further development of the field distinguishes between voluntary and non-voluntary forms of anti-consumption. Leipämaa-Leskinen et al. (2016) identify three defining characteristics of non-voluntary anti-consumption: it is often hidden, as it typically occurs among lower-income groups in private contexts; repressed, as it is externally imposed rather than freely chosen; and innovative, as constrained consumers find creative ways to maximise value and reduce spending. These features contrast with the value-driven, self-directed nature of voluntary anti-consumption.

However, this distinction becomes blurred when applied to identity-conscious consumer groups such as Generation Z. While non-voluntary anti-consumption is often driven by necessity or external pressure, Gen Z consumers are widely recognised for their proactive, values-based choices and for using consumption to express personal identity (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). This creates a conceptual tension: when financial constraints limit Gen Z's ability to consume, it remains unclear to what extent their behaviour is a passive reaction to hardship or still informed by expressive, identity-driven values. Current research has yet to fully explore how consumers with strong value orientations adapt under conditions of economic constraint.

2.2. Economic Crisis and Anti-Consumption

Economic crises influence consumer behaviour in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. Elhajjar (2023) finds that emotional, functional, and social factors shape clothing consumption during periods of economic instability. In Lebanon, for example, individuals often continue to shop for clothing as a means of preserving social visibility and emotional well-being, even amid hardship. This behaviour resembles the phenomenon of "revenge shopping" observed post-COVID-19 (Liu et al., 2023), wherein consumers respond to prolonged deprivation with spontaneous and emotionally charged purchases.

These findings complicate assumptions that financial crises always lead to reduced or cautious consumption. While budgetary constraints might be expected to suppress spending, Elhajjar (2023) observes that consumers continue to prioritise fashion and engage in impulsive purchasing, albeit as a form of psychological coping. Such observations challenge simplistic interpretations of non-voluntary anti-consumption as mere reduction; instead, consumers may adopt more selective or unconventional forms of consumption to satisfy enduring emotional and self-expressive needs.

Although economic distress is frequently described as a driver of "non-voluntary non-consumption" (Basci, 2014), several studies have also linked it to anti-consumption behaviours (Alimen & Bayraktaroğlu, 2011; Leipämaa-Leskinen et al., 2016). For instance,

Ozdamar Ertekin et al. (2020) identify three additional crisis-era strategies: re-finding (seeking cheaper alternatives, often via online or informal channels); reconsidering (deliberating purchases more critically); and relying on discounts (using sales and promotions as affordability mechanisms). These practices illustrate how non-voluntary anti-consumption may be more complex and strategic than previously assumed.

Beyond purchasing decisions, economic crises have broader psychological and behavioural impacts. They create negative expectations and emotional distress, which in turn affect consumption motivation (Cici & Özsaatçı, 2021). Ang et al. (2000) observed that during the Asian financial crisis, consumers in Singapore and Eastern Europe became more price-sensitive, delayed large purchases, and favoured local or discount retailers. They adjusted their behaviour by adopting more calculated spending strategies, prioritising functionality and durability, and seeking informational. These adaptive behaviours further reflect the link between economic disruption and constrained, value-driven consumption.

Against this backdrop, Generation Z presents a fascinating case. As a cohort defined by technological fluency, access-based consumption, and identity expression through products (Priporas et al., 2017; Francis & Hoefel, 2018), Gen Z consumers are likely to respond differently to financial stress than previous generations. For them, ownership is often secondary to access, and borrowing or renting clothing can align with both economic constraints and personal values (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). However, empirical studies examining how prolonged economic crises shape Gen Z's fashion consumption remain limited, particularly in national contexts like Türkiye, where economic instability has become both acute and enduring.

2.3. Research Gap and Aim

While previous research has outlined the theoretical foundations of anti-consumption and documented its occurrence during periods of economic instability, a significant gap remains in understanding how non-voluntary anti-consumption interacts with identity-driven consumer groups. In particular, the experiences of Generation Z—characterised by their digital nativity, strong self-expression, and global value orientation—are under-examined in contexts of sustained financial hardship. This lack of attention is especially pronounced in national settings such as Türkiye, where economic crises are both severe and prolonged.

This study seeks to address this gap by examining the lived experiences and personal narratives of Turkish Generation Z consumers during the current economic crisis. It aims to explore how their fashion consumption behaviours reflect a combination of enforced adaptation and the ongoing negotiation of identity-related values. In doing so, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the emotional, behavioural, and cognitive dimensions of non-voluntary anti-consumption among young consumers facing structural constraints.

3. Materials and Methods

This research adopts a qualitative methodological approach to explore the subjective, emotional, and behavioural dimensions of fashion consumption among Turkish Generation Z during the economic crisis. Given the study's aim to understand participants' lived experiences and nuanced meaning-making processes, semi-structured interviews were selected as the most appropriate method. This format allows for both consistency in question areas and flexibility to probe emergent themes (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Magaldi & Berler, 2018), which would not be achievable through structured surveys or quantitative tools.

Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data, following Braun and Clarke's (2022) framework for reflexive thematic analysis. Compared to more structured analytic

frameworks, such as the Gioia methodology or content analysis, thematic analysis is particularly well suited for studies aiming to uncover latent meanings, emotional responses, and context-dependent behaviour (Braun & Clarke, 2022). It enables researchers to move beyond surface-level content and explore how people construct meaning under economic pressure, which is central to understanding anti-consumption in a crisis context.

The sample included individuals born between 1996 and 2009, commonly referred to as Generation Z (Dimock, 2019), residing in Türkiye, engaged in full-time employment, and aged 18 years or older. While Generation Z covers a broad age range, this study specifically focuses on individuals aged 18 and over who are currently in full-time employment. This group was selected because it represents members of Gen Z who are actively participating in the workforce in Türkiye (TÜİK, 2024) and who have independent purchasing power, enabling them to make their own fashion-related consumption decisions. Although this does not reflect the entire generation, it allows the study to examine how economically active young adults within Gen Z are responding to financial challenges. The use of the Gen Z label remains relevant, as shared generational characteristics continue to influence their behaviour, even in contexts of economic constraint. Focusing on this cohort allows for a detailed examination of Gen Z's budgetary management and fashion market engagement during periods of economic instability, a critical consideration given their significance as a target demographic for fashion brands.

The geographical focus on Türkiye was motivated by the nation's history of economic volatility, rendering the findings potentially salient for understanding responses to future financial crises within this context. Each online interview, averaged 50 min, explored shifts in participants' attitudes, behaviours, and emotional responses. The sample consisted of fifteen participants, specifically two males and thirteen females, all of whom were engaged in full-time employment. All participants were identified as being from the working class, with the minimum wage in Türkiye being approximately TL 22,000 (Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2024). Data analysis was performed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). After transcribing the interviews, we read each transcript several times to become familiar with the content and context. We created codes by identifying repeated patterns, ideas, and expressions in participants' responses. These codes were then grouped into broader categories and refined through an ongoing process of review and comparison. This led to the development of the "8Rs" framework, which reflects the key behavioural and emotional themes in the data.

We recognise the Gioia methodology as a structured approach often used in organisational studies. However, we aimed to explore the everyday experiences and emotional responses of young consumers. For this reason, a more flexible thematic approach was more appropriate. The goal was not to build a theory step by step, but to understand how Gen Z participants respond to economic pressure in their fashion consumption habits.

4. Results

Using the thematic coding and analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022), the data were categorised into eight themes from the lectures presented in Section 2.2, which can be referred to as 8Rs: reject, restrict/reduce, reuse/reclaim, re-find alternative channels, reconsider, reframing discounts, re-direction of resources, and lastly, emotional responses and thoughts (Figure 1 and Table 1).



Figure 1. 8R framework emerged from this study (Source: Authors' own).

Table 1. 8R definitions.

8R	Definition
Reject	Actively avoiding or rejecting purchasing decisions due to high or rising prices, or questioning the fairness of price inflation during times of crisis.
Restrict/Reduce	Limiting or reducing consumption due to financial constraints, including cutting back on quantity or quality of purchases.
Reuse/Reclaim	The practice of using items more than once, either with minimal modification (Reuse) or repurposing them for entirely new uses (Reclaim), often driven by necessity or creativity.
Re-find	Seeking out alternatives or better deals, such as shopping in smaller stores, using price comparison tools, or looking for discounts and promotions to offset costs.
Reconsider	The internal process of re-evaluating wants and needs in light of financial constraints. Involves questioning whether a purchase is truly necessary.
Re-framing Discounts	Reinterpreting the value of discounts, where some consumers see discounts as a positive opportunity, while others view them sceptically, seeing them as a form of manipulation.
Recession Rush	The urgency to purchase items quickly due to the expectation of price increases, driven by economic uncertainty and fear of higher prices in the future.
Re-direction of Resources	The conscious reallocation of financial resources from one category of life to another (e.g., reducing leisure spending to afford fashion items).
(Emotional) Responses	Adjusting emotional reactions to purchasing and financial decisions, including dealing with feelings of guilt, excitement, or frustration, in response to economic pressures.

4.1. Reject

The rejection theme, from the perspective of clothing purchases, shows a complex decision-making process influenced by both rational evaluations and emotional responses to the current economic climate. Participants' decisions to reject purchases were driven by factors beyond price sensitivity alone. For example, the sharp price changes between items from one week to the next led to a sense of financial unfairness. As Participant 1 pointed out,

“I was going to buy a pair of pants for TL 200 one week, and when I went back a week later, it had gone up to TL 300. It’s like it went through a major price hike or something. I did not buy those pants.” (Participant 1)

This response shows a stronger emotional reaction to what consumers saw as price exploitation. It was not just the price change that they noticed—they were upset by the unfairness of the price increase. This rejection was not just based on logic; it was driven by a psychological reaction to feeling exploited during tough economic times.

“I used to buy new things not only to wear at work or outside but also to wear at home. I don’t buy clothes to wear at home anymore. I wear them even if they get old or torn.”
(Participant 15)

Similarly, Participant 15’s rejection of purchasing new clothes to wear at home demonstrates a shift in consumer values. This shows how the economic crisis has changed consumer priorities. Participants are no longer focused on novelty but are making more practical decisions based on need and financial limitations. Rejecting new purchases reflects a shift from luxury-focused consumption to value-driven choices. This can be seen as a psychological coping strategy—avoiding excess spending and making do with what they already have, easing the pressure to spend during uncertain economic times.

Many participants expressed dissatisfaction with price inflation, noting the perceived exploitation by sellers. As Participant 1 explained,

“We’re in a crisis, and everyone knows it, but I think some sellers are unreasonably raising prices. Sometimes I vent my anger and get into arguments.”

This statement illustrates that rejection is not just a financial choice but an emotional and symbolic act of protest. Consumers are resisting what they see as unfair pricing practices, using arguments or boycotts to express their dissatisfaction. Rejection, in this case, becomes an active form of resistance to a system they feel is exploiting them.

Another notable trend is that participants expressed a preference for online shopping when confronted with price disparities between physical stores and online platforms. This decision reflects a strategic shift towards online shopping, where consumers are actively avoiding higher prices in-store. It demonstrates how consumers are using price comparisons as a tool to regain control over their purchasing decisions. This is an example of consumer empowerment in response to perceived price exploitation in physical retail.

“I’m definitely not going to the store right now because the prices in the store are much higher compared to the internet.” (Participant 2)

Another rejection criterion is about the necessities. This highlights how, in response to the economic climate, consumers are reassessing their consumption habits, prioritising practical needs over wants. So, they can utilise whatever they have on their hands or wardrobes without buying new items if they do not really need a new one.

“I’m currently only shopping for what I need.” (Participants 2 and 4)

4.2. Restrict/Reduce

Due to the decrease in purchasing power, some participants reported that they had to compromise on the quality of the products they purchase (Participants 6, 10, and 8). This shift represents not just a rational decision to spend less, but an emotional adjustment to the reality of economic hardship. Their rejection of higher-quality items is not a purely logical decision but is driven by the anxiety of not being able to afford desired products.

“It seems like we’re increasingly forced to compromise on the quality of the products we buy. For example, I find myself having to buy lower-quality items.” (Participant 6)

They indicated that, prior to the crisis, their wardrobes consisted mainly of “branded” products, but after the crisis, these well-known brand names were replaced by lesser-known, local, and small boutique items. It is evident that the reduction in product quality is not the only consequence; there has also been a decrease in the quantity or number of items purchased. This change is not just about price but also a cultural shift, where prestige is replaced by pragmatic spending.

“I’ve reduced both the frequency of my shopping trips and the frequency of actually making purchases when I do go shopping.” (Participant 5)

“In the past, prices were not so exorbitant, and if I was between two colours in a product, I could buy both colours.” (Participant 10)

Some participants mentioned trying to make do with only a few clothing items for 3–4 months (Participant 6), reflecting a resilience in the face of scarcity. Others mentioned how they carefully consider their purchases, such as a participant who showed great attention to the shoes they bought and claimed to use them sparingly. The constraint and reduction in consumption are not limited solely to quantity or frequency but also extend to variety. Participants noted that their wardrobes used to be filled with clothes of different colours and styles, but as a result of the economic crisis, they now choose their purchases with a focus on colours and models (Participants 7–10).

“I used to buy something for myself regularly every month, like 5–6 items in total. For example, if I bought a pair of pants in a pink colour, I’d get a matching white shirt and a matching bag to create outfits. However, unfortunately, I can’t do such combinations anymore, and I’m buying fewer pants now.” (Participant 7)

“Since the prices of the products have increased even more, I have to think even when buying a medium quality product. Sometimes when I see the products, even if I like them in style, I can say that I don’t need them anyway. In short, I am always careful not to buy everything I want.” (Participant 11)

Buying a product in the same colour, model, or pattern might be considered unnecessary. Also, buying for enjoyment has significantly decreased. Shopping once was a daily activity, and now it has become a luxury and is focused on essentials due to financial constraints (Participant 9). Rather than finding pleasure in shopping, they aim to finish the shopping task as quickly as possible (Participant 3). Additionally, leisurely visits to malls for enjoyment have diminished as this might make them feel sad and angry when the reason was to enjoy in the first place.

Participants mentioned adopting various strategies to limit their clothing purchases. For example, Participants 2 and 3 avoid visiting shops altogether. Participant 5 postpones online purchases, leaving items in the basket for days and often abandoning the purchase in a way that tests their genuine desire. Another participant calculates the number of working hours required to purchase an item and may give up if she thinks it is unfair. All of these examples demonstrate how participants are becoming more strategic and deliberate in their purchasing decisions, employing tactics to gauge their true desires and avoid impulsive spending.

4.3. Reuse/Reclaim

Another distinct theme that emerged in the research is the “reuse/reclaim” theme. With rising costs and a decrease in purchasing power, some participants prefer to repair existing products rather than buy new ones. This can be considered as a move from consumption-based satisfaction to practicality-driven behaviour, as consumers find ways to extend the life of their belongings. Therefore, there is a growing inclination towards resourcefulness, where repairing becomes a more viable and cost-effective alternative to purchasing new items.

“Recently my shoe was torn, so I took it to the repair shop. It would have cost more to buy a new one.” (Participant 10)

Second-hand shopping is everyday, with many buying and selling on these platforms. Attitudes toward second-hand clothing can be categorised into three groups: beginners, those who still avoid it, and those who now use it more frequently. Some, like Participant 5, avoid purchasing items but sell them.

“I didn’t use second-hand apps because why would I wear someone else’s clothes when there are no economic problems? But now I have to use them.” (Participant 2)

“I love Vakko bags, but I can’t buy them anymore, I think their prices have risen too much. Still, if I want that fashion icon bag to be mine, I buy second hand. I follow these second-hand applications and if there is a model of a bag that I like, I offer a price to the owner and try to buy it.” (Participant 7)

“I swap with friends or sell clothes I don’t use on social media or Facebook groups. I have to use these methods to avoid spending more as my income is not enough.” (Participant 13)

Participants usually prefer second-hand clothing for special occasions, which occur at most a few times a year, such as weddings and engagements. For instance, Participant 2 mentioned their preference for purchasing clothes from a second-hand application for an upcoming wedding. On the other hand, participant 7, who stated that they had never used second-hand clothing before, found themselves downloading second-hand clothing applications due to the crisis.

Financial problems have reshaped attitudes, encouraging some to sell instead of buy. This shift reflects a larger cultural change, from consumerism to a more social economy; sharing economies.

4.4. Re-Find Alternative Channels

Feeling constrained by rising prices, people are increasingly seeking alternative solutions. At the research stage, participants mention strategies such as using price comparison websites (Participant 10) and/or manually comparing prices of the same product from different sellers on the same e-commerce platform (Participant 4). It is evident that consumers adopt a variety of methods during the shopping phase, and these methods signal a shift from passive shopping to a more strategic approach, where consumers actively seek to minimise costs.

Among the methods preferred, the following ones are common: shifting from in-store shopping to online shopping, embracing cost-saving approaches such as borrowing, sharing, or renting items to avoid excessive expenditure, adopting a “DIY” mindset by creating their clothing rather than purchasing them, thereby reducing costs, favouring small local boutiques over large well-known brands or retailers, and asking friends or acquaintances living abroad to bring back products when they visit Türkiye.

Nearly all participants report abandoning in-store shopping in favour of online shopping. One participant mentions tracking campaigns, such as “trade in your old clothes for a discount on new ones,” at physical stores, but still prefers online shopping (Participant 2). The primary reason for this preference is that they are aware that prices in physical stores are often higher than those online.

Participants are not only adapting to the economic climate but are also actively seeking out new solutions that align with their current financial constraints. They prefer lower-cost alternatives, which might be a growing consumer trend towards affordability over brand loyalty.

“I usually browse items in the store and then purchase them online because they are generally cheaper on the internet. Even brands that appeal to a wide range of budgets tend to be more expensive in physical stores, while I can often find the same products online for a lower price.” (Participant 6)

“A new online shopping brand entered the Türkiye market (Temu). Everything is very cheap here. So, I immediately downloaded the application and started shopping here.” (Participant 15)

Alternative methods, such as borrowing, sharing, or renting, are preferred for infrequently worn items, like those worn on special occasions, and are not motivated by environmental concerns. For example, Participant 6 stated that she would rent a wedding dress even for her wedding. Borrowing usually involves close circles, such as siblings or friends. While some viewed these practices negatively, one participant mentioned that it could create the perception of a richer wardrobe, even if the items belonged to others (Participant 6). Others, such as Participant 8, admitted to using these methods reluctantly out of necessity.

“When I know that I will wear a dress for only a few hours and only on special days, I don’t buy it because it is not rational. I rent instead.” (Participant 2)

“In the current economic conditions, there have been times when I borrowed clothes from my sister or close friends. But before the crisis, I would never have borrowed clothing from anyone. Before deciding to go shopping, we now often ask each other and take a look at each other’s clothes.” (Participant 10)

Another method involves individuals sewing their clothing. Participant 5, having acquired the necessary skills through a free course, reduces her clothing expenditure after reaching a level where she can sew clothes or dresses she likes on her own. She regards this as an investment and utilises the saved money to purchase items like shoes, which she cannot produce herself.

“There were things I wanted to buy but couldn’t, but I had my mom sew them for me.” (Participant 8)

“I have experienced bartering; if a friend has a dress I like, we can exchange it. This not only helps me to save my budget but also allows me to try something new. I also started doing DIY projects to renew my old clothes. For example, I redesigned an old T-shirt and sewed a little to make a new top.” (Participant 14)

Among the insights derived from the results of this study, there was a notable trend which indicates a shift from major brands to local, small, street-level shops or outlet-discount stores.

“Previously, I used to shop only from well-known brands. However, now I also shop from small boutiques in the backstreets that may sell older items or may not necessarily follow the latest fashion trends. But in the past, I wouldn’t even consider shopping from such small, vintage-style stores.” (Participant 9)

“Nowadays, I go to open-air markets. In the past, I wouldn’t do my shopping at open-air markets but now I do because things are usually cheaper there.” (Participant 7)

The underlying reasons for this shift are solely economic, with price increases even in mid-tier and low-tier brand products. People witnessing these developments are motivated to distance themselves from brands or products, sometimes due to budget constraints and sometimes as a form of protest against these brands (Participant 7). Another approach involves requesting friends, relatives, or acquaintances living abroad to bring back items from another country, which, despite currency exchange rates, can be more affordable compared to their high costs in Türkiye.

“I sometimes ask my cousin who lives in Germany to bring me the shoes I’ve shown because it’s difficult to buy high-quality shoes here because of their prices.” (Participant 3)

Considering these behaviours, it can be said that “renting ownership or access” has become more critical than “actually owning or possessing” in the context of consumer decision-making. Social networks can sometimes serve as a resource-sharing tool, and renting can be a strategic choice to protect one’s resources.

4.5. Reconsider

The economic crisis encourages thoughtful spending. Interestingly, in contrast, there is an opposite insight within this category: making immediate purchases without much deliberation, which differs from impulsive buying, as this is a consciously executed action rather than an irrational act. From this, it can be suggested that economic pressures lead to a more deliberate decision-making process.

Generation Z and their social circles tend to support each other during economic crises. They share discount information or consult each other when making purchases. For instance, Participant 1 mentions that among their friends, they provide recommendations and offer advice on affordability and pricing issues. To consolidate their resources, they place orders from a single online account and attempt to manage the high shipping costs (Participant 9).

“We inform each other about discounts in our group of friends and buy according to that. And because of the increase in shipping costs, we make purchases together from one account if only above a certain amount is eligible for free shipping. This way, we consolidate our shopping into one order to make it a free shipping.” (Participant 9)

“For example, when we are in the store with friends, we each look at different parts of the store. If we notice that an item has a good price or that it’s new, we can encourage each other to buy it. For example, “This would suit you, the price is very good, it looks like it’s new.”” (Participant 3)

The future aspect is another trigger for reconsideration. Participants indicate that they not only plan their next step but, like a chess game, plan several steps, aligning their actions with their financial capabilities. This suggests that financial planning has become increasingly essential, as consumers are becoming more long-term oriented in managing their spending and reducing future risks.

“I am planning a little more for the future. I am no longer thinking one step ahead but two or three steps ahead.” (Participant 10)

“I used to shop on a whim, but now I shop in a more conscious and planned way. Online shopping platforms have also helped me in this process. I can compare prices on different sites with a few clicks.” (Participant 12)

Additionally, they seek a positive correlation between the value a product provides and the money they spend on it, often conducting extensive research to achieve this balance (Participant 7).

“I do a lot of price/performance comparisons now. I do a lot of research such as user reviews, evaluations of people who have bought it. I think about whether the quality, fabric, brand etc. is worth the money I will pay.” (Participant 7)

“For example, when I am looking for a t-shirt in a store, I think: “Is this really my style?” “How much can I use it in my daily life?” “Is the price more favourable than elsewhere?”. I also think, “Do I need to spend money on something else?”” (Participant 13)

In contrast to the concept of reconsideration, a phenomenon named by the authors of this study, “recession rush”, was identified. In this scenario, participants make purchases in a deliberate and planned manner, but without waiting excessively. Some members of Generation Z are motivated by the belief that the Turkish lira rapidly depreciates unless it is invested in tangible goods (Participant 9).

“It is necessary to turn that money into something tangible as soon as possible. The money one has in one’s hands has no value unless it is turned into something. It’s just a pile of

paper. If I want to wear the money, I can't. So, when I have money in my hand, if I need to buy clothes, I buy clothes.” (Participant 9)

Others are driven by the fear of facing higher prices for desired products in the near future if they do not capitalise on current opportunities (Participants 8 and 15).

“... sometimes I see something, and I buy it right away because I'm worried that I might have to spend more money on it in the future. So, in a way, I'm thinking 'I should not miss this opportunity' and I feel like I'm taking a precaution because I'm going to have to spend more money on this product in the future.” (Participant 8)

“I don't want to buy a lot of clothes anymore, but I know that if I don't, they will be more expensive tomorrow. So, when I need clothes the day after tomorrow, I will buy them more expensively. I have recently bought a few pieces of clothes just because of this.” (Participant 15)

Additionally, some individuals choose to allocate their available funds to immediate clothing needs without delay due to uncertainty surrounding future economic conditions (Participant 2). The behaviours of Turkish Generation Z are full of contradictions in the face of a financial crisis, to the point where they feel that they do not know what to do or what to believe. They constantly experience emotional tension of reacting to immediate needs and concerns about future economic instability.

“I don't know what the future will bring. I often say, 'I'm glad I bought it' when I see that the price has gone up significantly the day after I purchased a piece of clothing.” (Participant 2)

However, some see something positive about the future in terms of sustainability in their changing habits.

“I now shop by thinking about the labour behind the items and their impact on nature. In this crisis, we can't do much good for ourselves, let's at least do good for nature.” (Participant 14)

4.6. Re-Framing Discounts

While it is possible to categorise people into two groups when it comes to “discounts”: those who were not interested in discounts before the crisis and those who actively started pursuing discounts after the crisis, just like [Ozdamar Ertekin et al. \(2020\)](#) found out, this research suggests a more inclusive categorisation. This categorisation is about participants' perceptions of discounts, including both positive and negative views. So attitudes toward discounts are context-dependent, shaped by the broader economic environment and individual values.

Participants who develop a positive perception tend to become more attentive to discounts and start actively monitoring them compared to their pre-crisis behaviour. Some even express the willingness to narrow down their clothing choices to include only items that are currently on sale (Participant 5). In this way, economic pressure makes the discount a central factor in some people's purchasing decision journey.

“Before, I didn't care if there were discounts or not. Now, I wait for discounts, even though I might not find what I want, and I select from discounted items based on fit and size.” (Participant 5)

Some participants prefer to wait for discounts and use various reminders on their phones etc., while others follow strategic approaches. As an example of this strategic approach, Participant 10 adds a desired clothing item to their favourites on an e-commerce website, and she completes the purchase only when the system's algorithm offers a discount

on the item in their cart. They try to deceive the system just like this system tries to deceive them. It can be said that a new competitive mindset has emerged where it is normal for consumers to try to deceive the system.

“I now save items I like on online shopping sites in my favourites. Adding items to favourites often prompts the site to offer discounts. When I receive discount notifications via email, then I plan my purchases.” (Participant 10)

On the other hand, the thought process of those who develop a negative perspective on discounts is shaped by their beliefs. This group, which can be referred to as “discount sceptics”, finds discounts unrealistic and untrustworthy. They believe that waiting for discounts is meaningless in a world where prices can rise at any moment, and they consider it a potential loss.

“Due to the current crisis, products are in higher demand, and I want to get them before they potentially get more expensive. Waiting for discounts isn’t reliable anymore.” (Participant 3)

“I am excited to save money, but I am also worried about falling into the trap of buying things I don’t need just because they are on sale. That’s why I am very cautious about discounts.” (Participant 13)

They view discounts as a means to temporarily soothe consumers, merely hiding the underlying causes of high prices. Some even suspect that discounts are a tactic to lure consumers into spending more money, perceiving it as a trap. Discount scepticism reflects consumers’ mistrust of promotions and sales. It is similar to price anchoring bias (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974), where consumers judge prices based on a reference point. However, it goes further by adding a sceptical view that questions the authenticity of discounts during uncertain economic times. Participants mentioned that discounts often seemed like manipulative tactics, causing them to avoid sales entirely.

4.7. Re-Direction of Resources

The term “re-direction of resources” refers to a new pattern that has emerged from this research as an original contribution to the literature. It describes the consumer’s action of reallocating or cutting resources from one source and re-directing them towards clothing or fashion-related purchases. For example, Participant 2 sells their own clothing to be able to make new clothing purchases.

“I buy something more affordable on the second-hand applications and then resell the clothes I wear and buy something else I need.” (Participant 2)

Another example is Participant 5, who loves reading books but, in the midst of an economic crisis, seeks an alternative source and decides to give up buying books in favour of joining a library. With the money saved, they invest in clothing.

“For example, I like to read books, so instead of buying books, I chose to become a member of the library. I can’t rent shoes, but I can rent a book for free from the library. So, I can buy clothes with the money I would normally spend on books.” (Participant 5)

Similarly, Participant 4, who needs to purchase shoes in a given month, trims their expenses on dining out and going to the cinema to use that spending to buy a new pair of shoes.

“For example, if I need to buy shoes, I spend less that month by cutting back on other things. For example, I cut down on eating out or going to the movies so that I can afford the shoes.” (Participant 4)

This behaviour is not just about sacrificing or cutting back, but involves creating a circular consumption model. The themes of reconsideration and re-direction of resources are closely related but operate at different levels of decision-making. Reconsider refers to the internal process of re-evaluating one's wants and needs in response to financial pressure. It refers to moments when participants stopped to reflect on whether they needed something. Instead of buying out of habit, they became more careful and thoughtful. In contrast, re-direction of resources involves a behavioural strategy. It is more about what people do with their money and how participants allocate their spending across different areas. Rather than giving up consumption entirely, participants often chose to reduce spending in one domain (such as socialising or leisure) to maintain spending in another (such as fashion).

4.8. Emotional Responses and Thoughts

The participants' emotional responses can be categorised into two contrasting groups, similar to the "discount" theme: positive and negative emotional reactions and thoughts. Generation Z's emotional responses to the economic crisis reflect a mix of adaptation and frustration. While positive feelings were not mentioned, there were some positive aspects discussed such as managing money wisely, adapting to new situations more easily and helping the environment even though it is something that arises out of an imperative.

"I've become better at managing money, calculating costs, and adapting to changing circumstances due to the crisis." (Participant 6)

"When I shop, I question, "Will this really take up a place in my life?" I realised that I have too many clothes in my closet, and I don't use many things. This situation has led me to a more minimalist lifestyle, and this is a good thing I guess." (Participant 12)

"I am really tired of this economic crisis situation. The only thing I hold on to now is that I have somehow reduced my consumption a little bit in the age of fast consumption and so I have some benefit to the environment." (Participant 14)

On the other hand, negative emotions and thoughts were common and plenty. Generation Z struggles with emotions such as anger, frustration, irritation, unhappiness, feeling of being a loser, anxiety, inadequacy, disappointment, fatigue, low self-esteem, introversion, and regrets in the face of rising prices.

"Normally, I used to pay a lot of attention to my style of clothing because I think it reflects me and my different outlook on life. But now I may have difficulties in this regard. Sometimes, even though a product appeals to me very much, I may not prefer it because it is too high priced." (Participant 11)

There has been a decrease in their motivation towards life and work.

"I feel like I'm in a slump; not being able to shop frustrates me. Because our income falls short, I can't fully engage in my work, and my motivation dwindles." (Participant 2)

Feelings of inadequacy, a sense of being deceived, and embarrassment, along with fears about what the future holds, are among the other emotions they have experienced.

"I get really upset about the state of the economy, especially when young people should be enjoying their lives, buying what they want, but can't, like us. It's really frustrating. Plus, there's a bit of fear due to the uncertainty. I am worried about what tomorrow will bring. I don't know if something that costs TL 1 today will be TL 5 tomorrow, so it's unsettling." (Participant 10)

"I used to go shopping with my friends, but now I sometimes have to refuse them in order not to be embarrassed, in case there is something I want to buy but I can't buy, and I make it known." (Participant 15)

5. Discussion

This study offers insight into how Turkish Generation Z, historically embedded in consumer culture, is transitioning toward involuntary anti-consumption in response to economic hardship. Unlike voluntary anti-consumption, rooted in ethical, environmental, or minimalist motivations, the behaviours observed here are largely necessitated by crisis. While participants expressed frustration and emotional discomfort, they also employed creative and adaptive strategies, which we classify through the proposed 8Rs typology.

5.1. Extending Anti-Consumption Theory: From 3Rs to 8Rs

Our findings build on the foundational typologies of anti-consumption, such as the 3Rs model—Reject, Reduce, Reuse—proposed by [Black and Cherrier \(2010\)](#), and the Reject, Restrict, Reclaim framework developed by [M. Lee et al. \(2011\)](#). While these models primarily describe voluntary consumption resistance, our 8Rs reflect non-voluntary, crisis-induced adaptations among young consumers. This aligns with [Leipämaa-Leskinen et al. \(2016\)](#) classification of non-voluntary anti-consumption as hidden, repressed, and innovative, with our data more strongly evidencing the latter two. Economic pressure, rather than an ethical choice, compelled participants to adjust their consumption. Yet, in doing so, they developed novel coping strategies, such as collective ordering, sourcing through friends abroad, or generating side income—hallmarks of innovation within constraints.

5.2. New Contributions: Recession Rush and Re-Direction of Resources

In addition to affirming existing dimensions of anti-consumption, this study contributes two original constructs. First, we introduce “Recession Rush”, a term describing strategic urgency in purchasing clothing before further price inflation—a behavioural contradiction to traditional anti-consumption. Second, “Re-direction of Resources” describes how consumers selectively deprioritise other spending categories (e.g., entertainment, books) to preserve fashion consumption. This mirrors themes in [Ruppert-Stroescu et al. \(2015\)](#), who documented resource prioritisation during “fashion detox,” but we reposition this as a non-voluntary, identity-preserving adaptation within crisis contexts.

5.3. Emotional and Functional Dimensions

[Elhajar \(2023\)](#) suggested that emotional, social, and functional motives shape clothing consumption during crisis periods. While the emotional and social dimensions were less prominent, functional reasoning was the dominant approach. Participants prioritised durability, practicality, and cost-efficiency. Interestingly, impulsive buying still appeared, but not as hedonic escape; rather, it was described as a calculated move to avoid higher future costs. This differentiates our findings from [Elhajar \(2023\)](#), revealing a more cognitively strategic form of impulsivity among Turkish Gen Z.

5.4. Coping Strategies and Consumer Typologies

Patterns observed in this study correspond partially with [Ozdamar Ertekin et al.'s \(2020\)](#) categories of “re-finding,” “reconsidering,” and “relying on discounts.” However, we refine the discount theme: rather than categorising consumers by frequency of discount-seeking, our participants expressed attitudinal differences—either trusting and waiting for discounts or perceiving them as manipulative (e.g., inflated prices or pressure to spend more). These sentiments point toward emotional contradictions within anti-consumption, as also noted by [Cici and Özsaatçı \(2021\)](#), who found that price instability induces anxiety, anger, and demotivation.

5.5. *Interconnectedness of the 8Rs*

Although presented individually, the 8Rs are interrelated in practice. For example, Reconsider often precedes Restrict or Reject, while Re-finding and Re-framing Discounts frequently co-occur. Emotional Responses underpin nearly all other categories, influencing both rational strategies (e.g., Reuse/Reclaim) and contradictory behaviours (e.g., Recession Rush). Additionally, Re-direction of Resources links emotional coping with functional budgeting. These interrelations highlight that anti-consumption under economic crisis is not a static typology, but rather a dynamic, overlapping system of responses, shaped by both external pressures and internal negotiations.

5.6. *Socio-Cultural and Individual Variations*

While economic hardship is the primary driver of behavioural change, variations emerged. Some participants—likely those with slightly more financial flexibility—engaged in recession rush behaviour, while others adopted minimalist or discount-centric approaches. Prior values, like early interest in minimalism or sustainability, also appeared to influence how easily participants accepted consumption cuts. These findings resonate with Francis and Hoefel's (2018) insights on borrowing behaviours among Gen Z, but in our context, borrowing is a forced, not chosen, act, further reinforcing the non-voluntary nature of their anti-consumption.

Echoing Ang et al. (2000), who studied post-crisis behaviours in Asia, Turkish Gen Z increasingly sought value over brand loyalty, switching from high-end to local brands, or from ownership to access models. This practical downshifting reflects both survival logic and identity negotiation within constrained environments.

5.7. *Theoretical and Practical Implications*

The 8Rs typology adds theoretical depth to anti-consumption literature by framing consumption adaptation as a continuum of emotional, behavioural, and cognitive shifts, shaped by macroeconomic uncertainty. Practically, the findings suggest a need for greater sensitivity in marketing, particularly among fashion brands targeting young people in emerging economies. Brands must recognise that resistance to consumption may not stem from apathy or disengagement, but from strategic survival and emotional fatigue.

6. Limitations

This study focuses on full-time employed members of Gen Z in Türkiye, which means the findings may not fully represent the experiences of unemployed, part-time, or financially dependent individuals within the same generation. While the sample reflects a meaningful and economically active subgroup, future research could expand to include broader Gen Z demographics to explore potential differences across income and employment status.

Another significant limitation of this study is the gender imbalance in the participant sample, with thirteen female participants and only two male participants. This reflects the gendered nature of interest and availability in fashion-related research, but also introduces a potential bias in the findings. As gendered norms and expectations often shape fashion behaviour and shopping motivations, the insights captured here are likely to be more reflective of female Gen Z experiences. While this does not diminish the value of the findings, it limits their generalisability, particularly in understanding how young men navigate fashion consumption under economic pressure. Future research should aim for a more balanced gender representation to explore possible differences or similarities across gender identities.

This study is based on a relatively small sample of fifteen participants, which limits the generalisability of the findings to the broader Gen Z population in Türkiye. The qualitative

approach aimed to explore rich, in-depth perspectives rather than provide a statistical representation. It is not possible to claim that the behaviours or views observed here reflect those of most young people in Türkiye. Future studies should include a larger and more diverse group of participants.

7. Conclusions

To conclude, this study has explored how Turkish Generation Z consumers have adapted their fashion shopping behaviours during a prolonged economic crisis. Through in-depth qualitative analysis, it introduces the 8Rs typology of involuntary anti-consumption, offering a conceptual framework that captures both behavioural and emotional responses to financial constraint. The typology includes: Reject, Restrict/Reduce, Reuse/Reclaim, Re-find, Reconsider, Re-framing Discounts, Re-direction of Resources, and Emotional Responses. Together, these represent a nuanced and interrelated set of adaptations that go beyond existing models of anti-consumption.

The research contributes to theory by extending prior anti-consumption frameworks (Black & Cherrier, 2010; M. Lee et al., 2011) and addressing the often-overlooked domain of non-voluntary consumer behaviour. It responds to the call by Leipämaa-Leskinen et al. (2016) to understand the hidden, repressed, and innovative strategies employed by financially constrained consumers. Importantly, this study positions identity-driven yet economically limited Gen Z at the centre of this evolving discourse. It highlights the tension between expressive consumption and structural limitations, illustrating how Gen Z consumers reconcile value-based aspirations with the constraints of limited resources.

The findings also challenge simplistic assumptions that economic hardship leads only to reduced spending. Instead, consumers creatively reallocate resources, question brand loyalty, emotionally regulate their shopping behaviours, and re-frame their participation in consumption, without entirely abandoning their generational emphasis on self-expression.

By foregrounding the emotional and cognitive dimensions of crisis-driven consumption, this study offers valuable implications for marketing, policy, and sustainability research. As economic uncertainty persists globally, understanding how younger consumers adapt involuntarily becomes essential not only for theory-building but also for designing more inclusive and empathetic consumer strategies.

Future research could extend the 8Rs model cross-culturally, explore its application in other product categories beyond fashion, or assess how these adaptations persist or fade once economic stability returns.

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