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Leadership and Organizational Culture in China's Television Stations

This paper categorizes organizational culture of China's television stations into three types including party culture, bureaucracy culture and commercial culture based on the value expression of organizational culture and organizational goals in television stations. By investigating a number of geographical representative television stations including CCTV, Shanghai TV, Beijing TV, Daqing TV, Hunan TV and Phoenix TV, this paper concludes that Chinese television stations which are undergoing structural reform have not developed a mature model of organizational culture. The organizational culture has more or less traces of above three types of culture. In principle, freedom and liveliness of organizational culture is positively interrelated with the loose of propaganda function and commercialization of television stations by the leading party and government. We conclude it is rather the enterprise vision made by China's television stations' leaders decided organizational culture, but not the other way round. The more developed economic area where television stations are located and the more loosen of control by superior government, the more change of organizational culture that television stations have made. Furthermore, this paper discussed restriction factors of organizational culture in different television stations, dilemma of program production and commercial function, current misunderstanding points and gave suggestions for organizational culture building in China's television stations.

1 Introduction

China's television stations are undergoing structural reform and leadership reform in recent years. Broadcasting industry in China was defined as cultural industry and controlling tool for the correct direction of public opinion. All television stations are owned by Chinese government and the Party. In recent years, China's television stations have been encouraged to be partly commercialized and merged into local or provincial media group/conglomerates. However, this kind of commercialization and mergers are not the same as those happened in the West. Commercialization does not mean to change the ownership of state-owned to private-owned. It means that television stations are encouraged to marketing their programs and earn more income. By now, the stations still keep two parallel leadership system called administrative management leadership and Party management leadership. Administrative management leaders are responsible for the quality of the programs and financial balance of the stations. Party management leaders are responsible for the political correctness of the programs and other performance. Management issues in China's broadcasting industry are very different with other countries. The ownership system great influenced the leadership style of China's television station.

Under current circumstance, culture and leadership issues in China's television stations are become more and more important. This study wants to investigate whether particular culture values help or hinder television stations in China. The research was initiated out of concern while both of us paid attention to the internal management of China's television stations. It is based on extensive discussion with senior executives and management teams in China's television stations. Besides extensive discussion, we used documentary analysis and checked existing research

about China's television stations from numerous journals and thesis database.

The paper categorized organizational culture of China's television stations into three categories including propaganda culture, bureaucracy culture and commercial culture based on value expression of organizational culture and organizational goals. A number of geographical representative television stations including CCTV, Shanghai TV, Hunan TV, Daqing TV and Phoenix TV are selected to make case study. Based on above analysis, we concluded that the more developed economic area where television stations are located and the more loosen of control by superior government, the more change of organizational culture that television stations have made. Furthermore, this paper discussed restriction factors of organizational culture in different television stations, dilemma of program production and commercial operation, current misunderstanding points of organizational culture building and gave suggestions for organizational culture building in China's television stations.

2 Finding

For long time, China's television stations are regarded as propaganda tool for Chinese Communist Party and the Government. Along with the opening policy from 1980s, people have discovered commercial character of television stations have been and pursued economic returns as one of their main goals. By now, there are more than 1000 television stations in China which ranks No. 1 in the world. Most China's television stations are state-owned which could be categorized as four types – China Central Television Station (CCTV), provincial television stations and big city television stations, small city television stations and non-state owned television stations.

Researchers (Xu 2004) found that Chinese organizational culture could be categorized as bureaucracy model, development model and family model. These three kinds of organizational culture can match with three human resource strategies:

Organizational Culture Strategy	Human Resource Strategy
Bureaucracy Model	Guidance Model
Development Model	Investment Model
Family Model organizational culture	Participation Model

Figure 1: Coordination of Organizational Culture and Human Resource Strategy

Having been managed by Chinese government and Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Chinese television stations are very different from other types of enterprises in terms of ownership, goals and management structure. For the dual characters of China's television stations as propaganda tool and commercial machine, the managers of Chinese television stations often feel lost or dilemma in practice.

This paper categorized organizational culture of China's television stations into three categories including party culture, bureaucracy culture and commercial culture based on value expression of organizational culture and organization goals.

- *Party culture*: emphasize party and government's route, principles and policy, promote the party and government.
- *Bureaucracy culture*: emphasize to obey bureaucratic power system, superiors' will and concept to ensure their own power and position.
- *Commercial culture*: emphasize to gain advantage and commercial benefit from market competition, serve for economic return of television stations.

2.1 China Central Television Station (CCTV): Monopoly

China Central Television Station (CCTV) is the only central government-owned and nationwide influential television network. In recent years, though CCTV is by far the dominant player in the market, its advertisement sales in some cities have taken a hit from local competition. CCTV news generally emphasizes propaganda value. Efficiency is much less important for it. However, when the US-led attack on Iraq began in 2003, CCTV started to run nearly non-stop and live broadcasts. The sudden transformation reflected a deliberate government strategy to turn China's news media into more commercially minded organizations. It was obviously very successful. Average rating for CCTV-4 rose from 0.8% (before the war) to 3.2% (during the war), with the corresponding market share from 2.6% to 10.0%, and the corresponding reach from 6.9% to 21.0% (see Lan & Xu 2005).

CCTV's position of monopoly is still apparently very strong, suppressing numerous provincial television stations and city TV stations, which sometimes as ambitious participants are eager to cut the growing market share and to prevent their domestic audience. CCTV has invested more in the area of original programs to defend its domestic and overseas competitors. Due to its monopoly position and history as the government's mouthpiece, CCTV owns incomparable monopoly advantage and national influence such as government influence, media authority, obligatory national coverage, government financial support and news interview freedom. These advantages have further attracted national television talents and developed organizational culture which featured as pursuing high-quality and high-standard organizational culture under comparatively stable bureaucratic management system. For instance, CCTV owns a dozens of best television program producers including news anchors. The reputation of these television journalists, anchors and commenter are closely linked with their programs and become symbols and pillars of the programs. For mainland Chinese audience, the most famous journalists and anchors mainly come from CCTV.

2.2 Shanghai TV: Both Commercial Benefit Oriented and Political Mission Oriented

In April 2000, Shanghai Media and Entertainment Management Bureau has been found. In April 2001, the bureau found Shanghai Media and Entertainment Group (SMEG) which merged Shanghai television stations, radio stations and film studio. The former two Shanghai television stations (Shanghai TV and Oriental TV) lost their independent operation position. SMEG owns eleven professional channels which ranks No. 1 as local broadcaster after CCTV in terms of program production and broadcasting scale. At present, the total revenue of the group has exceeded RMB 6 billion and profit has exceeded RMB 1 billion. SMEG owns Shanghai Oriental Pearl (Group) Co., Ltd. which is a listed company. The company was listed in 1993 in Shanghai Stock Exchange and become the first listed culture company in China. In recent three years, it has been titled as "15 best return listed companies in Shanghai". In 2003, TV advertising revenue of SMEG has exceeded RMB 2.3 billion though it still can not compare with CCTV which has RMB 7 billion (Zhao & Feng 2004).

Organizational culture of Shanghai Television Station is both commercial benefit oriented and political mission oriented. Zhikang Ye, General Secretary and CEO of Shanghai Media and Entertainment Group (SMEG), has been nominated as Director of Shanghai Media and Entertainment Management Bureau. From a government official to a CEO, the change of the title and role should be very big. Nevertheless, Mr. Ye claimed "There is no big change. Media and entertainment system are under the leadership of Shanghai Government Committee and Shanghai Municipality. It is

under deep reform constantly. I feel that I am more useful in the new group.”

SMEG is a national media group which has monopoly position. At the same time, SMEG needs to “follow market economy principle to survive and develop”. CEO of SMG (branch of SMEG), Mr. Ruigang Li claimed that all subordinate television stations and radio stations are required to operate as modern corporations. SMG is aimed to realize two big changes: 1. Produce programs for market not for broadcast. 2. Alter its local broadcasting position to national even international content providers and distributors. The “China Financial News Brief” in Shanghai TV which cooperates with CNBC is pioneer program cooperation sample which broadcast in overseas TV network. On the other hand, organizational culture of Shanghai Television Station is still characterized as to serve political mission. In 2004, SMEG launched employee political study titled “three study education” according to the guideline of China Central Propaganda Bureau. Varies media including television stations guide and supervise employees to study and obey principles and policies of CCP. Their grades are linked with their annual performance review (see Xinhua Net 2004).

2.3 Hunan Satellite TV: Vanguard in Commercial Operation and Management in Hidden Crisis

Hunan Television Station owns multiple television channels. Among these channels, Hunan satellite TV is the most successful. The manager of Hunan Television Station called for “Vitalize national media industry and be the best television station in China.” The station launched a number of pioneer television programs in mainland China including the TV dating show called “Rose Dating” and first star building show called “Super Girl Song” in China.

For internal organizational reform, Hunan satellite TV is ahead of many other stations. Program production and advertising department adopted 4/6 profit sharing system which is helpful to develop good relation between two departments. Functions of Hunan satellite TV include channel management, promotion and planning, program production, broadcasting control and feedback. Officers in Editor-in-Chief Room make in-depth survey about national television market and adjusted all programs many times according to market changes. Hunan TV often recruits anchors, program producers, advertising managers and even directors openly. The station widely distributed recruitment news on newspapers, televisions and the Internet.

Nevertheless, the success of commercial operation does not mean that internal organizational culture building has been finished. According to a report written by internal employee (Ouyang 2002), there are a number of hidden crisis as following:

First of all, some managers lack of team spirit and use their power to gain personal advantage. These managers “eat” (Chinese usage, i.e., gain personal advantage) programs, production fee, equipment, channels, brands and relationship. The victim of power misuse is overall program quality and employees’ working enthusiasm. For human resource management, these managers like to use their own networking people in terms of hiring and rewarding. So far, Hunan TV has not established “talents importing system” and “employees withdraw system”. Highly-qualified talents were often rejected and low-qualified people and guanxi people were often recruited.

Secondly, television station lacks fairness and methods to encourage talents. At present, Hunan TV staffs are categorized into different employee contracts such as formal employees, station-contract employees and program-contract employees. The difference of their salary and bonus are mainly based on these categories but not their performance, enthusiasm and talents. Unfairness dispels working enthusiasm of employees undoubtedly. The leading staffs of program production and broadcasting gradually learned how to protect themselves. They would save their energy, keep resource of programs, and leave some leeway. Employees could not receive expected return for what they have worked. Current stimulating system of Hunan TV is not completed including employee training and promotion system.

Thirdly, bureaucracy is very serious. Internal administration keeps obvious state-owned administrative behavior but not entrepreneurial behavior. They can not change their behavior suddenly. Some leaders are not familiar with and are not willing to try to be familiar with the principles and methods of commercial operation.

2.4 Daqing TV: Party Tool

Daqing Television Station is located in Daqing, the biggest oil production city in northeastern China. Based on rich revenue from oil production, local government has much more financial source than other small cities. Along with structural reform trend in China, Daqing government merged all television and radio stations into Daqing Radio and Television Group. What they emphasize the most is not to build up the most influential media but to ensure party function of municipal government.

Editor-in-Chief Room of Daqing television is often treated as a place to allocate lay-off staff. They usually calculate articles, receive and mail documents, publish internal briefing and meeting minutes although the Group redefined the function of Editor-in-Chief including program planning, audience rate survey and program reviewing. In real life, the fulfillment of these tasks is not very professional and superficial. For example, program plan means a few key producers discuss the program. The plan lacks of program

survey, market analysis, rating prediction and human resource allocation.

Human resource management of Daqing Television Station have the following problems.

- *Lack of TV talents*: Outstanding journalists, anchors and managers lack. Current employees and managers are not capable in their position.
- *Employee retention*: Due to be discontented with their income, popular anchors, a number of producers and computer engineers have left the station.
- *Redundant personnel*: Some redundant personnel can not be fired. For example, central control room of technology center in television station is responsible for program broadcasting. In analogue equipment time, the station needs seven employees to change tapes. Now the station uses digital equipment and broadcast programs by computer equipment. These “tape” employees are still hired.
- *Rigid internal staff moving*: The station does not encourage employees to move between different departments and programs. The policy restricts outstanding talents. Incompetent people are encouraged to occupy key position continuously. Competition and encouragement system are lacked in the station. How much income advertising department received has no relation with program producers. It often happened that anchors forgot to broadcast 5 minutes advertising. Such organizational culture which lacks of cooperation and common value is obviously not benefit for the realization of organizational objective.

2.5 Phoenix TV: Exceptional Organizational Culture Strategy

Phoenix TV is the one of the non-state owned television stations. It has been listed on the Growth Enterprise Market (GEM) of the Stock Exchange of Hong Kong since June 30, 2000. Although launched only nine years ago, it has become the most popular TV news channel in mainland China with an audience of about 150 million people. Due to expensive access fees, only a limited number of Chinese, such as government officials and wealthy citizens, have access to satellite TV (Xu 2005). Despite this mass market barrier, PST is very successful in terms of program rating. PST has 5 channels, including Phoenix Chinese TV, Phoenix Film Channel, Phoenix Satellite Infonews, Phoenix Satellite European Channel, and American Channel. In January 2003, the Chinese State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) granted Phoenix InfoNews Channel the permission to launch in China. This permission gave Phoenix a pioneering position in the Chinese TV market. To date, the government has allowed only a limited number of foreign TV channels to enter the Chinese TV market. Although Phoenix is based in Hong Kong, Phoenix InfoNews used the launching rights as an overseas TV channel, but not as a Chinese TV channel. This is due, in part, to language barriers (e.g., Mandarin versus Cantonese) and po-

litical issues (i.e., local Hong Kong people watch Cantonese speaking channels such as Wu Xian TV and Asia TV). Therefore, Mandarin speaking Phoenix has a big influence in mainland China and elsewhere.

As a television station only established nine years, Phoenix owns no advantage as CCTV. Its survival and development is always in policy crack. However its highly-qualified staff is no less competent than CCTV. It is benefit from “three famous strategy” which promoted by Phoenix Director of Board and CEO, Changle Liu (Zhao 2004). “Three famous strategies” refers to promote famous journalists, famous anchors and famous commentators which encourage organizational culture characterized as personality in order to win advantage in market competition.

In terms of geographical coverage, Phoenix journalists, anchors and commentators cover the whole Great China region. They come from mainland China, Taiwan, Hong-Kong and Macao and speak all kinds of dialect. They own different target audience groups. Although these Phoenix stars come from different regions, all of them are well-educated and have media industry experience or professional background in other industries. They also have certain reputation in their past working experience. “Phoenix management is a combination of Chinese and western culture like ‘Phoenix’ title and sign. Phoenix symbolizes harmonious blend of eastern and western culture, supplement of traditional culture and modern culture.” (Zhou 2006)

In order to survive and success, Phoenix has to bring some different feeling called “peculiar style” promoted by Changle Liu for its audiences. “Peculiar style” refers to strengthening Hong Kong, Taiwan and traditional Chinese culture programs. Phoenix program is “nondescript”: it is unlike mainland China televisions stations and unlike Hong Kong, Taiwan or Singapore televisions stations. Its “east, west, south and north galaxy” style gives more program and anchor choice for audiences.

Its programs are accepted by Chinese who live in different cultural background. Phoenix employed Hong Kong, Taiwan, mainland China and even Western television players. They tried to combine north culture which representing mainland China, south culture which representing Hong Kong and Taiwan vanguard culture and modern expression methods in the west to form unique Phoenix style which suit both refined and popular tastes. In fact, all these staff who come from all corners draw on each other's merits and raise the level together. “A strong expression of Phoenix culture is: working for Phoenix is an honor and a career, but not a job to survive. Phoenix wants to be the leading runner of Chinese language television culture, news reform and Chinese culture.” (Zhou 2006)

3 Discussion

Based on above analysis, we concluded that the more developed economic area where television stations are located and the more loosen of control by the superior government, the more change of organizational culture that television stations have made.

3.1 Dilemma of Program Production and Commercial Function

Inside some television stations where operational system have not largely changed, their production department and operation department often have problems which reflect problems between propaganda function and commercial function. At present, management of Chinese television stations especially those middle and small sized television stations usually believe that they should plan and manage party mission and commercial mission in consensus in order to strength their competitive advantage. In China, television stations are always run as propaganda institutions for the government. They are operated as administrative government unit model. Different departments manage advertising and television series businesses. Editor-in-Chief Room is not empowered to coordinate overall programs. Its function is the bridge between superior propaganda institutions (local broadcasting management bureau and propaganda department of local CCP committed) and internal programs production department. Superior departments accept political tasks and give the tasks to program production departments. Then they review, edit and promote these programs. Advertising department usually run advertising businesses passively based on designated programs. Such phenomenon has been occurred because commercial character of domestic television stations has been neglected for long time. Even when commercial character is widely recognized, practical operation of media is not evaluated by commercial results as first standard.

3.2 Organizational Culture in Different Television Stations Is Restricted by Administrative Level, Government Control Style, Management Level and Human Resource quality.

Organizational culture building in industry experience shows that most organizational culture has been built based on original "culture" except a few newly-established enterprises. That means most them started from "non-zero" point. China's media has long history and has developed into certain organizational culture. Chinese television stations need do survey first, understand and summarize current culture situation of media groups and various factors which influence organizational culture in order to finally positioning organizational culture.

For long time, China's television stations are categorized into different levels. Moreover, management departments of news reports in different regions have managed and

supported media on different level which influenced operation psychology and operation methods of television stations directly. These differences also influenced value concepts and pursue of employees. Only when we realized the influence of various factors including politics and environments for media development, our organizational culture building will have adaptability. Whether editing and operation is more important, what characteristics of editing and operation in China's television stations, what market risks China's television station face, what differences their superior management methods have, all these situation have decided personality and characteristics of organizational culture in China's television stations.

Second, due to various reasons including history and government policy, every television station faces different problems. These problems are breakthrough of organizational culture building. For example, some television stations produce low-quality and less competitive programs. Some television stations own strong operation capability and can develop all kinds of businesses. Some television stations are badly-managed and waste huge resources. Some television stations are good at organization system construction. Some television stations have low work efficiency and effectiveness. If we build organizational culture from these main problems, we can arouse attention of staffs strengthen practical value of organizational culture. This is a fundamental positioning question of China's television station reform.

Third, the quality of television stations' managers and employees is key for organizational culture building. Basically, the creation and development process of organizational culture is a exploration process of employees' personal qualification in a social group (i.e., organization). How much influence employees have been received from traditional administration and how much attitude employees have changed in media reform, all these factors directly influenced their attitude towards reform, thinking modes and prediction. The design of organizational culture should be fit to the qualification of organizational employees. Through acknowledging basic value orientation, emotion, expectation and needs of employees such as satisfaction for operation of television station, personal relation, reform consciousness and willingness to participate management, we can make sure basic value and ethnics in television stations. These factors are most direct resource to build organizational culture.

3.3 Current Misunderstanding Points of Organizational Culture Building in China's Television Station

3.3.1 Confuse Organizational Culture with Ideological Politics work

Ideological politics work which traditional Chinese socialist organizations have been promoted are for resolving employees' ideological problem by persuading and guiding. The main work is ideology construction and working

style construction which emphasize on people's political ideology. Organizational culture should emphasize on the combination of value and conception, business ethics and principles, operational vision and strategy.

3.3.2 Neglect Creativity and Personality

Organizational culture is unique management model of an enterprise in specific culture background. It reflects the personality of enterprises. It is not a standard integrated model and not an expression to adapt to the trend. Many Chinese enterprises including television stations often use words like "uniting, development, innovation, contribution" to express their organizational spirit. These expressions have no unique personality and style and become standard equipment of organizational culture. Moreover, some enterprises have been copied organizational culture of foreign or domestic colleagues. In the past few years, China's organizational culture appears to imitate each other and have no personality.

3.3.3 Lack of Employee Participation

Organizational culture should be group consciousness which have developed gradually in the enterprises. Some enterprises have turned organizational culture into words and slogans which coined by a few leaders. Organizational culture becomes "*entrepreneur culture*". Although entrepreneurs are leading power in traditional enterprises, real organizational culture needs all employees to form common ideology which permeate into every cell of the enterprise. Therefore, organizational culture should not only reflect consciousness of a few people, but to reflect true group consciousness of employees. Employees are masters of the enterprise and participate enterprise' operation and management. They are the most qualified people to discuss organizational culture. Without their participation, organizational culture is like water without origin and wood without source. Modernization of corporate governance raised a series of complete new requirements for employees such as quality awareness, innovative thought, service spirit etc. Nevertheless, if every employee lacks internal desire to set up these concepts on their own initiative, these concepts will become a series of empty posters and slogans.

3.3.4 Insufficient Understanding for

"People Oriented Leadership Style"

Organization development theory argue that the motivation of organization growth and development come from highly-efficient operation of internal human resource, financial resource and material logistics. As a combination of knowledge and intelligence in organizations, human capital is invisible capital in the organization which can not copy and transfer. It is core competency in the organization. The centre point of organizational culture in television station is: enterprise management should devote much attention to employees, think highly of employees, see em-

ployees as real master of television stations, establish "people oriented leadership" principle, carry out "people oriented leadership" organizational culture management and emphasis "people oriented leadership" values. For many years, China's human resource management including television station still remains in the period of experience and has not been real human resource management. Current status is not adapt to modern organizational culture which is centered as "people oriented leadership". Traditional human resource management in China's television stations is centered around "issues" but not "human". For example, human resource departments in China's television stations are mainly responsible for administrative work. They do not evaluate quantity and quality of current employees. All their work has little connection with the realization of organizational efficiency and integrated objectives. Modern human resource management requires all work to centered around "human". This is the key for television stations to develop its organizational culture. By integrating development objective, our television stations should develop people's potential and stimulate employee's innovation in order to let employees to carry out their work actively and creatively.

3.4 Suggestions for Organizational Culture Building in China's Television Stations

First, leaders and employees should participate in organizational culture building actively. Outstanding organizational culture is spiritual garden for managers and all subordinates. Managers are promoters, creators and practitioners of organizational culture. Moreover, organizational culture needs intelligence and wisdom, active participation of all employees. If the organization give full play to their employees' initiative and creativity, organizations' objectives and believes are rooted deeply in every employee's mind, they will have strong feeling of commission, honor and responsibility. Establishing "people oriented leadership style" show enterprises' highly attention to the development of employees which is helpful to establish their master consciousness, therefore these action established good motivation and psychological basis for them to carry out and pursue the objectives of the organizations. Establishing "people oriented leadership style" is to establish master position of employees in the enterprise and let employees to feel they are real responsible, powerful, respectable and valuable person.

The success of Phoenix TV is largely due to its strategy which centered people oriented leadership strategy. It has been devoted to help employees to realize their personal needs and individual value. On the one hand, Phoenix has been devoted to promote famous anchors, journalists and commentators. It let anchors exposes themselves very frequently in public and try to be closer to the audience. Phoenix produced many personal image advertising programs

for its anchors and grasped every chance to let anchors to appear on all media. On the other hand, Phoenix produced special programs which fit for anchors' personality, style and specialty. Once an anchor become famous, Phoenix will produce new program for him/her to attract audience, develop audience loyalty and strengthen influence of anchors.

Second, organizational culture must have personality. This means we need to pay attention to relationship research between western organizational culture theory and Chinese traditional culture to build organizational culture which has Chinese characteristics. Each organization has different history, objectives, organizational structure, environmental and competitive pressure. Therefore, they have different characters when they deal with environment and internal conflicts. Different value leads to different organizational culture.

Third, keep innovation and face the future. Along with the process of information evolution and knowledge economy, organizations face ever-changing competitive environment changes. Traditional organization models can not fit for current environment any more. Under such background, study type organization theory emerged as the times required. Organizational culture needs to be beneficial for learning organization. Organizations and employees have the capability and will to learn, use and spread new knowledge. This is the fundamental for organizations to fit for ever-changing environment.

In summary, construction of organizational culture in Chinese television stations ought to be based on Chinese culture background and integrate corporate governance practice and modernization process. At the same time, we ought to borrow organizational culture theory and methods from abroad. Organizational culture is comprised of a whole complicate set of ideology, symbols, value outlook which shared by the whole organization and influence strategic objectives of the enterprises. Strategic leaders of television stations should initiate and develop organizational culture which supports the development of enterprise strategy in order to benefit enterprise operation, promote human resource management, encourage to share technology and resource, strengthen innovative spirit. Based on above conditions, television stations will have chance to gain comparative advantage in the more and more fierce Chinese television market.

Last but not least, this paper shows that organizational culture is restricted by enterprise management system. We would argue that the weaknesses of culture construction in Chinese television stations reflect current status of the characteristics of corporate governance of Chinese television media. This might be the most direct fruit for observing current organizational culture of Chinese television stations.

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