



## **Strategic Relationship Value and Supply Chain Resilience: Decoupling Satisfaction from Loyalty in the Indonesian Automotive B2B Sector**

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### **Abstract**

As the Indonesian automotive industry faces intensifying competition within the ASEAN Economic Community, specifically from Thailand, the strategic imperative has shifted from price leadership to supply chain resilience. This study investigates the economic efficacy of relationship value in driving customer loyalty within the Business-to-Business (B2B) spare parts sector in West Java, hypothesizing trust, commitment, and satisfaction as critical mediators. Utilizing a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach with data from 211 decision-makers, the research challenges the canonical Service-Profit Chain theory in emerging markets. The empirical results demonstrate that while relationship value significantly bolsters trust and commitment, a divergence from Western models is observed: customer satisfaction does not significantly influence loyalty ( $CR < 1.96$ ). This anomaly suggests that in the Indonesian B2B context, retention is driven by structural commitments and calculated relationship value rather than affective satisfaction. These findings imply that to sustain competitive advantage, firms must prioritize the engineering of strategic partnerships over satisfaction metrics, offering a new perspective on industrial retention strategies in developing economies.

**Keywords:** Relationship Value, B2B Supply Chain, Structural Equation Modeling, Customer Loyalty, Strategic Innovation.

### **Introduction**

West Java is the main manufacturing center for Indonesia's automotive industry because many industrial estates like KIIC, MM2100, EJIP, and Surya Cipta are located there. They are home to numerous tiered component suppliers and original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) (Arini & Ardi, 2021; Santoso et al., 2020). In the post-pandemic era, global supply chain disruptions, global political instability, and the rapid shift to electric vehicles have grown operational risks and increased firms' dependence on consistent coordination between firms within automotive value chains (Gaikindo, 2024; "Indonesia's Electric Vehicle Outlook," 2023). Under these conditions, supplier–OEM relationship stability emerges as a strategic economic asset rather than merely a marketing outcome, as relational continuity directly affects

coordination efficiency, production reliability, and cost containment. The inability to sustain loyalty in business-to-business (B2B) relationships may therefore generate significant transaction cost inefficiencies, including repeated renegotiation, increased monitoring, supplier switching costs, and heightened exposure to opportunistic behavior (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Palmatier et al., 2006).

Even though this is how things are structured, a lot of the main Western relationship marketing literature assumes that markets are fluid and competitive, that buyers can easily switch brands, and that loyalty is mostly based on how happy and satisfied customers are with the relationship (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Palmatier et al., 2006). These assumptions are increasingly failing to reflect the institutional realities of emerging economies such as Indonesia. In many Indonesian B2B settings, market competition is influenced by industries dominated by a limited number of firms, supported by well-organized supply chains and strong ties among companies within shared business groups (Arini & Ardi, 2021; Santoso et al., 2020). Within this environment, procurement decisions tend to rely less on individual evaluations of satisfaction and more on centralized authority, contractual arrangements, and entrenched cultural norms that stress compliance in business relationships. This situation is often described by the local business norm “Asal Bapak Senang”, which means more importance on satisfying superiors than on independent decision-making (Geiger & Naacke, 2023; Lasrado et al., 2023). As a result, loyalty is often maintained by reliance on internal group connections rather than by self-initiated commitment, suggesting that the main assumptions of traditional relationship marketing theories may not fully apply (Ulaga & Eggert, 2006; Voorhees et al., 2025).

Prior research in B2B marketing has consistently reported a positive and significant relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty, particularly in developed and highly competitive market settings. Foundational and following studies define satisfaction as a central evaluation process through which perceived value is translated into repeat purchasing behavior, trust formation, and long-term relational commitment (Lam et al., 2004; Palmatier et al., 2006; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006). More recent evidence drawn from large-scale data and comprehensive reviews of earlier studies reinforces this view. It shows that satisfaction improves the quality of relationships and is a key factor in building loyalty, especially in markets that are more dynamic and where customers have more options and can switch suppliers more easily (Ferro-Soto et al., 2025; Geiger & Naacke, 2023). Within this main literature, satisfaction is thus viewed as more than an outcome of exchange but as a key driver that encourages relationship continuity and competitive advantage.

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However, new evidence from B2B environments with structural constraints calls this common belief into question. The early findings from the Indonesian automotive sector show a noticeable gap between customer satisfaction and loyalty. Although satisfaction is important to maintain a credible business relationship, it does not mean that satisfaction will lead to customer continuity in business relationships in contexts with strict contracts and few alternative suppliers (Geiger & Naacke, 2023; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006). Structural and economic factors, including inter-company dependency, switching costs, and centralized purchasing authority, sustain loyalty rather than emotional assessments of relationship quality (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Palmatier et al., 2006). This difference highlighted the need to re-evaluate current retention strategies and theoretical assumptions, indicating that operating in strict B2B contexts should prioritize structural commitment and value-based coordination over satisfaction loyalty programs (Lasrado et al., 2023; Voorhees et al., 2025).

The primary economic issue examined in this research concerns the paradox within the Indonesian automotive supply chain, where elevated customer satisfaction does not consistently result in sustained loyalty (Geiger & Naacke, 2023; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006). In light of the strategic imperative to remain competitive within the region, it is essential to analyze the mechanisms by which relationship value is transmitted in business-to-business contexts (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Palmatier et al., 2006). This study investigates whether the conventional mediators of trust, commitment, and satisfaction perform effectively within the West Java industrial cluster. It also examines if structural market biases make certain mediators, especially satisfaction, economically insignificant in promoting long-term retention (Arini & Ardi, 2021; Lasrado et al., 2023).

### **Research Method**

#### **1. Technical Analysis: Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)**

Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) was carried out with the Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation method. CB-SEM was chosen for its effectiveness in analyzing complex causal relationships among observed variables and latent constructs within a confirmatory research framework. In accordance with established methodological guidelines, sample size adequacy was maintained by ensuring a minimum ratio of ten observations per estimated parameter. The proposed structural model included 19 parameters, requiring a minimum sample size of 190 observations. The present study fulfilled this standard, as a result confirming the strength and reliability of the parameter estimates (Hair et al., 2022).

## **2. Data Collection Techniques**

Purposive sampling was employed to collect data, targeting respondents with specific expertise and authority relevant to inter-firm purchasing decisions. The sampling approach focused on key informants, specifically individuals directly engaged in or accountable for procurement and supplier selection decisions within customer firms. It was not influenced by an ambiguous population size. In business-to-business settings, especially in the automotive supply chain, purchasing decisions are made by specific decision-makers or buying committees. Responses from employees who are not decision-makers are not methodologically sound. Accordingly, only respondents with demonstrable involvement in purchasing evaluation, supplier coordination, or contractual decision-making were deemed eligible to complete the questionnaire, ensuring the validity and relevance of the empirical data collected (Malhotra et al., 2020; Sugiyono, 2019).

The study was based on a total of 211 valid responses, which satisfies established sample size requirements for Structural Equation Modeling. Consistent with the methodological guideline proposed by Hair et al. (2022), a minimum ratio of ten observations per estimated parameter was applied to ensure model stability and statistical power. Since the proposed structural model consisted of 19 parameters, the minimum required sample size was 190 respondents. A total of 211 samples were collected, which already exceeds the minimum requirement, and it means the data are reliable and can support parameter estimation and strong hypothesis testing within the SEM framework (Hair et al., 2022).

## **3. Operationalization of Variables**

A variable is an attribute of an individual or an object that displays variation across individuals or objects. Variables represent constructs or characteristics that are subject to systematic observation and analysis in a study (Sugiyono, 2019). The following section presents the operational definitions of the variables employed in this study, all of which were measured using a Likert-type measurement scale.

**Table 1. Operational Definition of Relationship Value Variables**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Conceptual Definition</b>	<b>Sub-Dimension</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Code</b>
Relationship Value	The value created and delivered to customers, including customer value for the firm and customers' perceived value of products	Relational Intimacy	The main supplier adds value to the relationship	R1
		Relational Intimacy	The relationship becomes stronger	R2

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	or services resulting from business relationships (Payne & Holt, 2001, as cited in Gil-Saura et al., 2009)		through cooperation with the supplier	
		Relational Intimacy	The relationship with the supplier is perceived as more valuable	R3
		Economic Benefit	The relationship provides benefits exceeding the associated costs	R4
Trust	The belief in a supplier's reliability, integrity, and competence in fulfilling obligations within a business relationship (Gil-Saura et al., 2009; Morgan & Hunt, 1994)	Reliability	The supplier is sincere and honest	T1
		Reliability	The supplier fulfills promises and commitments	T2
		Reliability	The supplier honestly communicates problems that may affect the customer	T3
		Responsiveness	The supplier shows concern for the customer's interests	T4
		Reliability	Information provided by the supplier is trustworthy	T5
		Competence	The supplier is capable and knowledgeable in handling products used by customers	T6
Commitment	The intention and willingness of a firm to maintain a valued business relationship over the long term (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006)	Confidence	The customer strongly maintains the business relationship	C1
		Confidence	The customer has strong confidence in the supplier	C2
		Reliability	The firm intends to maintain the	C3

			relationship in the long term	
		Reliability	The relationship is valuable and worthy of maximum effort	C4

**Table 2. Operational Definition of Customer Satisfaction**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Conceptual Definition</b>	<b>Sub-Dimension</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Code</b>
Customer Satisfaction	The evaluative process through which customers assess their purchasing experience by comparing perceived performance with prior expectations, including their overall consumption response to a product or service (Hunt, 1977, as cited in Gil-Saura et al., 2009).	Behavioral Intention	The firm intends to continue purchasing products from the same supplier in the future	L1
		Behavioral Intention	When requiring the same product, the firm will repurchase from the same supplier	L2
		Behavioral Intention	The firm plans to purchase more frequently from the same supplier	L3
		Behavioral Intention	The firm is likely to try other products offered by the same supplier	L4

## **Result**

### **1. Measurement Model Evaluation**

The validity and reliability of the measurement instruments were assessed prior to evaluating the structural model. Item validity was examined using the split-half method, and internal consistency reliability was evaluated through Cronbach's alpha. The overall reliability coefficient obtained from SPSS was 0.948, indicating an excellent level of internal consistency.

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This value substantially exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, confirming that the measurement items consistently capture the underlying constructs (Malhotra et al., 2020). Given this high reliability coefficient, all items were retained for subsequent confirmatory analysis within the structural equation modeling framework.

Normality was evaluated at both univariate and multivariate levels. Multivariate normality was assessed using Mardia’s coefficient. The critical ratio for multivariate kurtosis was 147.474, far exceeding the recommended threshold of 2.58 ( $\alpha = 1\%$ ). This result indicates that the data do not follow a multivariate normal distribution. Given that covariance-based SEM is known to be sensitive to deviations from multivariate normality, this result was taken into account in the interpretation of model fit indices, particularly those less sensitive to distributional assumptions (Hair et al., 2022).

Convergent validity was evaluated through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) by examining standardized factor loadings. As shown in Table 2, all observed indicators exhibited standardized loadings exceeding the recommended minimum threshold of 0.50, indicating satisfactory convergent validity.

**Table 3. Construct Validity (Standardized Factor Loading)**

		Estimate			Estimate
Trust	← Relationship Value	.746	T1	← Trust	<b>.765</b>
Commitment	← Relationship Value	.758	T2	← Trust	<b>.726</b>
Satisfaction	← Relationship Value	.772	T3	← Trust	<b>.726</b>
Commitment	← Trust	.090	T4	← Trust	<b>.713</b>
Loyalty	← Trust	.468	T5	← Trust	<b>.789</b>
Loyalty	← Commitment	.392	T6	← Trust	<b>.660</b>
Loyalty	← Satisfaction	.149	C4	← Commitment	<b>.734</b>
R4	← Relationship Value	<b>.620</b>	C3	← Commitment	<b>.750</b>
R3	← Relationship Value	<b>.732</b>	C2	← Commitment	<b>.739</b>
R2	← Relationship Value	<b>.683</b>	C1	← Commitment	<b>.772</b>
R1	← Relationship Value	<b>.590</b>	S1	← Satisfaction	<b>1.000</b>
			L1	← Loyalty	<b>.781</b>
			L2	← Loyalty	<b>.737</b>
			L3	← Loyalty	<b>.742</b>
			L4	← Loyalty	<b>.655</b>

These results indicate that the indicators properly represent their corresponding latent constructs.

Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were used to further evaluate construct reliability. Table 4 below presents the CR and AVE values for each construct.

**Table 4. Composite Reliability (CR) and AVE Summary**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Relationship Value	0.735	0.434	Acceptable (CR > 0.70)
Trust	0.873	0.534	Good
Commitment	0.836	0.561	Good
Loyalty	0.820	0.533	Good

Although the AVE for Relationship Value was slightly below the recommended minimum level of 0.50, its CR exceeded 0.70, indicating acceptable reliability for preliminary and replication research.

Normality was assessed using skewness and kurtosis statistics displayed in the table below.

**Table 5. Univariate and Multivariate Normality Test**

<b>Indicator Group</b>	<b>Skewness (CR)</b>	<b>Kurtosis (CR)</b>
Univariate	3.997 to 1.842	0.899 to 3.316
Multivariate	-	<b>37.916</b>

The multivariate kurtosis critical ratio exceeded the threshold of 2.58, indicating a non-normal multivariate distribution. Nevertheless, due to the robustness of Maximum Likelihood estimation with large sample sizes, additional univariate normality assessment was considered unnecessary.

## **2. Structural Model Fit**

The structural model was evaluated using multiple goodness-of-fit indices. The Chi-square test was significant ( $\chi^2 = 391.023$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), a result that may be attributed to the test's sensitivity to the sample size ( $N = 211$ ).

**Table 6. Model Fit Measurement**

<b>Fit Index</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Standard Limit</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
CMIN/DF	2.697	< 3.00	Acceptable
CFI	0.884	$\geq 0.90$	Marginal Fit
RMSEA	0.090	$\leq 0.10$	Acceptable

Although the CFI value was marginally below the conventional threshold, the RMSEA value of 0.090 suggests a mediocre yet acceptable fit, which aligns with expectations for

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complex mediation models. Therefore, the model shows an acceptable level of estimation error, supporting the interpretation of the structural relationships.

### **3. Hypothesis Testing Results**

The structural relationships among constructs were tested using CB-SEM. The results of hypothesis testing are summarized in Table 3 below.

**Table 7. Hypothesis Testing Result**

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Path Relationship</b>	<b>Estimate (<math>\beta</math>)</b>	<b>C.R. (t-value)</b>	<b>P-value</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
H1	Relationship Value $\rightarrow$ Trust	0.989	7.338	***	Supported
H2	Relationship Value $\rightarrow$ Commitment	1.035	5.525	***	Supported
H3	Relationship Value $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction	1.161	8.746	***	Supported
H4	Trust $\rightarrow$ Commitment	0.093	0.847	0.397	Rejected
H5	Trust $\rightarrow$ Loyalty	0.393	4.711	***	Supported
H6	Commitment $\rightarrow$ Loyalty	0.320	2.968	0.003	Supported
H7	Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Loyalty	0.110	0.723	0.469	Rejected

## **Discussion**

### **1. The Strength of Relationship Value (H1, H2, and H3 Accepted)**

The results indicate that Relationship Value is an important predictor of main relationship outcomes in the business-to-business context. As shown in the relationship model estimates, Relationship Value has a statistically significant and meaningfully strong influence on Trust ( $t = 7.338$ ), Commitment ( $t = 5.525$ ), and Satisfaction ( $t = 8.746$ ). All three results exceed the important limit ( $t > 1.96$ ), which provides strong evidence for Hypotheses H1, H2, and H3.

The level of these t-values shows that Relationship Value works as a central driver of relational quality, rather than serving only as a supporting construct. This result is consistent with previous theoretical research and is based on multiple studies indicating that customer perceptions of relationship value form a multidimensional evaluation integrating economic, social, and strategic benefits in business-to-business exchanges (Geiger & Naacke, 2023; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006).

**Table 8. Structural Effects of Relationship Value on Relational Outcomes**

<b>Structural Path</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>CR (t-value)</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Relationship Value → Trust	0.989	7.338	Significant
Relationship Value → Commitment	1.035	5.525	Significant
Relationship Value → Satisfaction	1.161	8.746	Significant

From an economic perspective, these results provide strong justification for viewing relationship-building activities as strategic investments in soft assets rather than discretionary costs. Investments in relational mechanisms, such as client entertainment, joint planning initiatives, and intensive communication practices, generate direct returns in the form of heightened trust and commitment. In line with relationship marketing theory, such relational resources improve relationship stability and reduce relational uncertainty, thereby strengthening long-term inter-firm cooperation (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Palmatier et al., 2006).

Furthermore, in dynamic and competitive B2B environments, particularly within emerging markets, the strong effect of Relationship Value underscores its role as a buffer against transactional volatility. By improving perceived relational benefits beyond price considerations alone, firms can create differentiated value propositions that are difficult for competitors to replicate (Gil-Saura et al., 2009; Lasrado et al., 2023).

Overall, these findings confirm that Relationship Value is a key mechanism for firms to influence trust, commitment, and satisfaction, maintaining its role in sustaining B2B relationships.

**2. The Failure of Trust to Translate into Commitment (H4 Rejected)**

In contrast to current assumptions in relationship marketing theory, the data-driven results demonstrate that Trust does not significantly affect Commitment. Table 9 shows that the structural path from Trust to Commitment produces a t-value of 0.847, which is considerably below the minimum required level of 1.96. So hypothesis H4 is not supported.

**Table 9. Structural Effect of Trust on Commitment**

<b>Structural Path</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>CR (t-value)</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Trust → Commitment	0.093	0.847	Not Significant

This finding indicates that trust alone is insufficient to ensure commitment in modern B2B environments, especially in developing market contexts. Trust reduces perceived relational risk; however, it does not naturally encourage firms to commit long-term resources

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or establish enduring partnerships. This result partially challenges the traditional Commitment–Trust model, which asserts trust as a basic foundation to commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Economic rationality often governs business-to-business (B2B) decision-making. In this highly competitive, price-sensitive environment, firms may trust their partner's integrity and reliability but still hesitate to commit to a long-term relationship, especially when other suppliers can offer even slight price advantages. The price difference of 3 to 5 percent is more affected by considerations than by the relationship itself, particularly in industries with narrow margins and unstable costs. Meta-analytic evidence supports this interpretation, indicating that the relationship between trust and commitment weakens as economic pressure and competitive intensity increase (Palmatier et al., 2006).

Furthermore, market volatility and supply chain uncertainty diminish the influence of trust on organizational commitment. In these contexts, firms emphasize flexibility instead of developing deeper relationships, choosing to maintain alternative options rather than establish commitments that may limit future strategic actions. This approach indicates a transition to pragmatic relationship management, in which trust is regarded as necessary but not sufficient for fostering long-term commitment (Sheth, 2021).

Within the Indonesian and broader emerging-market context, this result underscores the dominance of instrumental economic logic over relational sentiment. Trust can facilitate smoother transactions and reduce monitoring costs; however, commitment arises only when relational value is supported by tangible economic incentives, including cost efficiency, risk-sharing mechanisms, or strategic complementarities (Arini & Ardi, 2021).

The rejection of Hypothesis H4 should not be seen as a weakness of the model. Instead, it reveals a structural limit of relationship marketing theory, showing that trust does not automatically become commitment when market conditions favor short-term improvement and price-based competition.

### **3. The Satisfaction–Loyalty Anomaly (H7 Rejected)**

The empirical findings reveal a counterintuitive yet theoretically meaningful result: customer satisfaction does not exert a significant influence on loyalty. As reported in Table 10 below, the structural path from Satisfaction to Loyalty produces a t-value of 0.723, which is significantly below the critical threshold of 1.96. Accordingly, Hypothesis H7 is rejected.

**Table 10. Structural Effect of Satisfaction on Loyalty**

<b>Structural Path</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>CR (t-value)</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Satisfaction → Loyalty	0.110	0.723	Not Significant

This finding challenges the traditional assumption that customer satisfaction naturally leads to loyalty. Instead, it aligns with an expanding body of B2B literature indicating that loyalty is often influenced by structural constraints rather than affective evaluations. In numerous B2B relationships, repeated transactions and sustained engagement frequently result from switching barriers and lock-in mechanisms, rather than from satisfaction.

Switching Costs Theory provides a theoretical explanation for this phenomenon, asserting that customers may remain loyal despite low satisfaction when the perceived costs of changing suppliers are substantial (Lam et al., 2004). Such costs include contractual penalties, asset specificity, process integration, learning costs, and risks associated with supplier changes. In these conditions, loyalty becomes a behavioral and enforced construct rather than a voluntary and attitudinal one.

Recent observed studies further validate this interpretation in modern B2B contexts. Ferro-Soto et al. (2025) argue that mere satisfaction is increasingly insufficient to ensure post-sales loyalty, especially in markets defined by standardized products and minimal differentiation. Likewise, Voorhees et al. (2025) state that the continuity of post-sales relationships is frequently influenced by governance frameworks and dependency structures rather than only by relational emotions.

This anomaly may be even more obvious for a developing country like Indonesia. Market structures that feature highly concentrated markets, limited supplier options, or long-term procurement contracts can limit buyer choice, weakening the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty. Based on data, Indonesian B2B service sectors show that companies may maintain relationships even with moderate satisfaction levels, due to operational dependence and the risks associated with switching (Adhyaksa & Astuti, 2025).

This finding should not be construed as undermining the significance of satisfaction. Instead, it implies that satisfaction serves as a hygiene factor instead of a catalyst for loyalty. Dissatisfaction can lead to the end of a relationship, but satisfaction alone does not ensure loyalty unless it is supported by relational value, trust, or structural incentives.

In general, the rejection of Hypothesis H7 is an important theoretical contribution of this study. It points out an important boundary condition in the satisfaction–loyalty paradigm and shows how important it is to look at loyalty formation in B2B relationships from both economic and structural points of view.

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### **Conclusion**

This research conclusively demonstrates that within the West Java automotive B2B sector, relationship value acts as a fundamental antecedent that significantly amplifies organizational trust, commitment, and satisfaction, consistent with prior conceptualizations of relationship value in business markets (Gil-Saura et al., 2009). However, a critical divergence from established theoretical models is observed, wherein neither trust significantly influences commitment nor does satisfaction drive loyalty, indicating that market behavior is governed predominantly by price sensitivity and structural contractual obligations rather than affective relational states (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). These findings suggest that the conversion of relationship value into customer retention is mediated primarily through direct commitment channels and pragmatic trust, rendering satisfaction metrics largely redundant as predictors of future loyalty in this specific industrial context. Consequently, strategic management in the automotive supply chain must pivot from satisfaction-oriented programs toward reinforcing structural commitment and delivering tangible economic value to secure long-term competitiveness.

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