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INFLUENCE OF SELECTED FIRM DRIVERS TO STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING: A CASE OF KENYA CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY

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Abstract: **Decision making is very crucial from an individual to organizational perspective since the decision output could lead to positive or negative impact. Few studies have been conducted in regards to the selected drivers to strategic decision making with some recommending further studies to be undertaken. The study exclusively focused to investigate the drivers to strategic decision making in KCAA. The study was guided by the following objectives namely; to assess the influence of organization structure on strategic decision making in KCAA, to assess the influence of top management characteristics on strategic decision making in KCAA, to assess the influence of organizational resources on strategic decision making in KCAA and to assess the influence of organizational culture on strategic decision making in KCAA. The study was guided three theories namely; Resource-Based Theory, Contingency Theory and Market-Based Theory. The study used descriptive Research Design with a population of 756 from which a sample of 164 was drawn. Stratified Radom Sampling Technique was employed to derive the sample. Primary data was collected using questionnaires while secondary data was gathered through literature review. The secondary data was collected through reviews of existing relevant documents. Respondents were members of staff in the Top Management, Senior Management and Middle Management. The study established that selected firm drivers influences Strategic Decision Making. The findings of the study affirmed existence of a significant positive relationship between the four key components of selected firm drivers namely; Organization Structure, Top Management Characteristics, Organizational Resources and Organizational Culture with Strategic Decision Making. The findings further indicated that of the four components, Organization Structure comparatively played a major role towards Strategic Decision Making, while the role played by Organizational Culture was the lowest. The study recommends that the management of organizations in Kenya should put in place high Organizational Structure Strategies as it leads to improved Strategic Decision Making. Organizations should ensure they have an effective Organization Structure in terms of power, hierarchies and recruitment in which all the Strategic Decision Making processes can be well accommodated. The study also recommends that future scholars and researchers aim to test the relationship between Organizational Structure and Strategic Decision Making using different sub constructs apart from hierarchies, power and recruitment. This can bring rigour and offer platforms for comparison of findings.**

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Decision making is the process of making choices by identifying logical alternatives through gathering information and assessing alternative resolutions. According to Mankins (2011), it is a global practice for international organizations and companies to undertake strategic decision making. He further states that these entities compete globally since they follow a carefully structured approach to decisions, one that ensures agreement on criteria, facts, alternatives, commitment and closure. And they put in a place a few simple enablers that help the process work smoothly. The results are fast, high-quality decision making and execution. Kenya has been undertaking public reforms in order to counter bureaucracy in decision making, improve on accountability and utilize resources effectively (World Public Sector Report, 2007).

As part of these reforms, The Presidential Taskforce on Parastatal Reforms Report of 2013, concluded that it was imperative for separation of government owned entities from mainstream government to minimize political interference in decision-making so as to achieve transformation of government owned entities to effectively support the national development agenda. However, the government has been providing policies so as to guide the strategic decision-making processes. According to Kinuthia (2012), the Government of Kenya has sought to rationalize strategic decision-making process in public sectors through strategic plans, policy reviews and directives which are issued from time to time.

He further acknowledges that this was necessitated by the need for firm structures to be in place so as to promote efficiency and effectiveness in the way services are delivered. KCAA has been undertaking strategic decisions through the engagement of its employees and stakeholders so as to undertake its mandate. KCAA is targeting to achieve 100% customer satisfaction levels for the 2016/17 financial year. This is an uphill task that calls for proper strategic decision making that ensures improved level of performance by its employees without demeaning the employee relations.

Statement of the Problem

Modern firms, world over, are faced with real challenges of strategic decision making. In Malaysia, PCB report of 2009 highlighted that poor strategic decision-making mechanisms was a key challenge in the management of an estimated 67% of the organizations in the public sector. In response to this, a public management reform dubbed NPM was undertaken that called for radical changes to different areas of public sectors (Nooraie, 2008). The author further mentions decentralization of decision making systems as one of the key changes that was put in place to combat the ineffective and inefficient strategic decision making.

Many public sectors institutions in developing countries are characterized by weak systems of accountability, bureaucracy in decision making and lack of effective utilization of resources (Africa Economic Commission Report, 2017). The defects in the strategic decision making mechanisms has led to loopholes for corruption in the public sector. Furthermore, the corruption perception index indicates that more than two-thirds of African countries score below 50, with an average score of 43, which is a high corruption index and it is attributed to decision making processes. Further the report recommends that in order to have an effective policy making system there is need for the decision makers to prepare options, analysis, forward-looking scenarios and recommendations. Public sector organizations today are faced with challenging task to modernize their decision making process. These include increased reviewed regulations, policies and globalization among others. Organizations within the public sector therefore need to continuously assess and analyze their strategic decision making systems in order to remain relevant is in service delivery.

Decision making across the Kenyan public sector are similar through specified procedures for accountability purposes. This is to try to combat the degree of discretion practiced by the decision makers (Mullins, 2006). KCAA is not an exception. KCAA has been undertaking strategic decision making in order to meet the international regulations standards along with the law of the land. The ever-changing annexes and regulations from ICAO has been forcing KCAA to hasten the process of decision making in order to meet the timelines for enacting the regulations. This has brought about challenges to KCAA on both the employees and stakeholders relations whom at times feel left out in decision making (KCAA Customer Survey Report, 2014). The report noted that 57% of the respondents agreed that the decision making mechanism in place was effective, which indicates there's room for improvement.

It is important that all necessary levels of decision makers, who are also the implementers, are engaged in the process so as to have an effective strategic decision that would go through the phase of implementation. Kinuthia (2012) investigated the factors influencing strategic decision making process at the headquarters of the ministry of roads, Kenya. The author contented that predetermined decision making process is effective because it enhances uniformity. Kagathi (2013) researched on strategic decisions making at JKUAT and concluded that strategic decisions potentially influenced performance of the organization since it involved both its external and internal stakeholders. Kariuki (2015) focused on the influence of strategic decisions on performance of secondary schools in Nakuru Sub County in Kenya. The author noted that strategic decisions influence performance of Secondary Schools.

From the above studies, few studies have been conducted in regards to drivers to strategic decision making with some recommending further studies to be undertaken. More so, none has investigated the selected drivers to strategic decision making in KCAA. By carrying out this research, the foregoing gaps will be addressed as the research sought to answer the questions: what are thes elected drivers to strategic decision making in KCAA? And to what extent does it affect the strategic decision making in KCAA?

General objective

The main objective of the study was to determine the influence of selected firm drivers to strategic decision making in KCAA.

Specific objectives

1. To assess the influence of organization structure on strategic decision making in KCAA.
2. To establish the influence of top management characteristics on strategic decision making in KCAA.
3. To determine the influence of organizational resources on strategic decision making in KCAA.
4. To examine the influence of organizational culture on strategic decision making in KCAA.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Resource Based Theory (RBT)

The key proponents of the RBT were Wernerfelt (1984), Prahalad & Hamel (1988) and Barney (1990). The RBT aims at optimally utilizing its resources to give a firm a competitive advantage over its competitors (Tywoniak, 2007). Resources are inputs into the production process and are intangible or tangible. Intangible resources are soft products that are more difficult to evaluate, measure, and transfer. They include skills, knowledge, relationships, motivation, culture, technology, and competencies. Tangible resources are easy to identify, evaluate, concrete and tractable. They include the physical and financial assets that are identified and valued in a firm's financial statement such as raw materials, capital and land. The RBV theory has been used by many researchers in the field of strategic decision making, for example, Gerald *et al* (2012) among others.

Contingency Theory

Contingency theory is an organizational theory that claims that there is no best way to organize a corporation, to lead a company, or to make decisions. Instead, the optimal course of action is contingent or dependent upon the internal and external situation. The contingency theory presently provides a major framework for the study of organizational design (Donaldson, 2011). The author further contends that it holds that the most effective organizational structural design as it is where the structure fits the contingencies. Different contingent leaders effectively apply different styles of leadership to the right situations. This theory asserts that managers make decisions based on the situation at hand rather than a one size fits all method. A manager takes appropriate action based on aspects most important to the current situation.

Managers in a university may want to utilize a leadership approach that includes participation from workers, while a leader in the army may want to use an autocratic approach. As stated by Donelly *et. al.*, (2008) the system approach views an organization as a group of interrelated parts with a single purpose because the action of one part influences others; managers cannot deal separately with individual parts, in decision-making and problem-solving. This approach embraces the use of a framework of systematic output followed by feedback to solve problems. The author concludes by inferring that all the four approaches emphasize on managerial decision-making effectiveness, but in different applications and perspectives.

Market-Based Theory

The key proponents of this theory were; Porter (1977) and Bain (1968). The Market-Based Theory (MBT) of strategy argues that industry factors and external market orientation are the primary determinants of firm performance (Peteraf & Bergen, 2013). The sources of value for the firm are embedded in the competitive situation characterizing its end-product strategic position. The theory includes theories developed in the industrial organization economic phase of Hoskisson's account of the development of strategic thinking and the positioning school of theories of strategy (Hoskinsson *et al.*, 2008). This phase mainly emphasized on the firm's organizational culture and the environment. Researches inferred that the performance of firms was significantly dependent on the industry environment (Nyasimi, 2016).

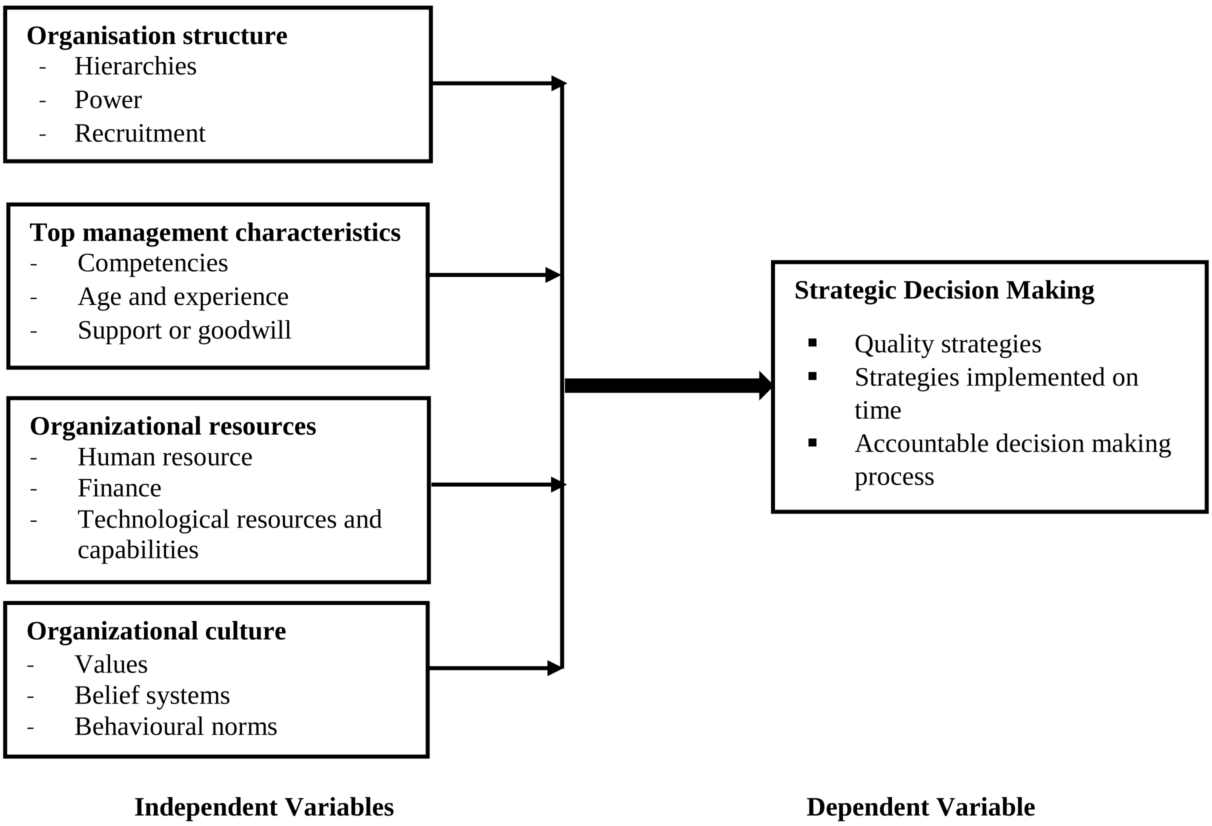
According to Elbanna & Child (2007), firm performance rather than environmental characteristics, such as environmental uncertainty, appears to be the most important moderator of the relationship between the strategic decision-making process dimensions and strategic decision effectiveness. Firms under pressure to improve their performance will tend to employ more rational decision-making processes. The research concluded that decision-specific characteristics played a central role in relation to strategic decisions, with environmental factors playing a significant role. Firms are always reliant on the external environment in order to implement effective strategies that complement organizational culture that may arise (Thompson & Strictland, 2013).

Therefore, critical steps are undertaken to adapt to the conditions and trends that could affect the industry by implementing relevant strategies through an elaborate strategic decision-making process. Economic forces are the factors that help to determine the competitiveness of the environment in which the firm operates (Business Dictionary, 2016). The economic forces dictate how resources and products can be allocated to the different needs of the organization and customers (Bridoux, 2016).

Therefore, decision making can be based solely on the impact of the external forces experienced by the firm. According to Chen (2013), corporate investment, employment and pricing decisions are mainly considered as basis for conceptualizing strategies to combat the unexplained economic variations in the market.

Policies that are applicable in the market defines how the business community should operate, provide their services and adhere to professional standards (Totter *et al.*, 2014). In many organizations, policy guidelines are used to harmonize business processes and operations which in turn influences strategic decision-making process (Coglianese, 2012). In Kenya, policies have been adopted in various public-sector reforms across different ministries so as to reduce corruption, improve on service delivery and reduce bureaucracy in decision making processes.

Conceptual framework



Empirical Literature Review

According to Kinuthia (2012), the most common drivers to strategic decision making across firms include external environment, organizational structure, corporate culture, policies, resources, personality and attitude of decision makers, top management support and vested interests. All these factors were inferred to have an influence on strategic decision making processes with the most notable one being the organizational structure measured at 30% since it dictates who makes the decision. The author also noted that policies played a part by being inferred at 27% of the factors affecting SDMP. This was the case as it dictated the decisions by setting boundaries. Organisation structure, top management characteristics, organizational resources and organizational culture cut across all the factors that may have been pointed by other authors. The influencers are more comprehensive as they widely encompass the relevant factors inclusive of the uniqueness of the operation of various organisations.

According to Forbes 2012, An Organizational Structure defines how activities such as task allocation, coordination and supervision are directed toward the achievement of organizational aims. A study carried out by Langley (2010), found out that the relationship between strategic decision-making process and different organizational models are related to organization structure, and leadership style.

Wally & Baum (2014) concluded that the more centralized a firm's decision making structure, the faster the pace at which executives will evaluate an alternative; also, the more formalized a firm's decision-making structure the slower the pace at which executive will evaluate an alternative. In support to this, Kinuthia (2012), concluded that organizational structure is the key factor that influences decision making process at the ministry of roads, Kenya. The author inferred this since it attributed highest percentage of 30%. With the backing of the preceding studies, it is clear that organizational structure is a key factor affecting Strategic Decision Making. Organizational factors such as slack, past strategies, and power which indirectly shapes internal organizational structure characteristics seems to have received very minimal attention from past researches. Similarly, there are some conflicting results from all studies linked to organizational size and decision making process (Kengne, 2015). The main organizational structure factors are hierarchies and power.

According to Noorie, (2012) organizational ideology on power influences the nature of the decision-making process in several ways: it provides basis for problem identification, objective setting, and alternatives generation. (Beyer, 2011) contends to this by declaring that this makes it difficult for managers to agree on which objectives are legitimate and what alternatives are worth pursuing since the veto approach is in play. Further to this, Donaldson & Lorsch (2013) clearly indicated that there is a relationship between organizational based ideologies on power and strategic decision making. Nooraie, (2012) stated that my literature review indicates that studies relating organizational hierarchies to strategic decision making have produced contradictory results. It was noted that Child (2012) claimed that organizational hierarchies is positively related to the extent of comprehensiveness in the decision-making process, while Dean & Sharfman (2013) found no such a relationship. The contradicting results suggests more findings to be undertaken so as to establish a comprehensive outcome.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Target Population

The target population was all Kenya Civil Aviation (KCAA) staff totalling to 756 employees. They are distributed in 21 departments and across 5 levels of management namely; Top Management, Senior Management, Mid-level Management, Low level Management and Subordinate Staff.

Out of these, three levels of management are involved in Strategic Decision Making namely; Top management, Senior Management and Mid-level Management, therefore a purposeful sampling was undertaken to identify the number of respondents for each level of management.

Reliability of the instrument

Reliability is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials. If a study and its results are reliable, it means that the same results would be obtained if the study were to be replicated by other researchers using the same method. Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's Alpha. Cronbach's Alpha is a reliability coefficient that indicates how well items in a set are positively correlated to one another (Sekaran, 2006). According to Bryman & Cramer (2005), generally reliability of 0.7 to 1.0 is considered acceptable. For this study an alpha coefficient of 0.7 and above was considered reliable. Reliability was further considered through drawing literature from only past researches with reliability coefficient above 0.7.

Data Analysis and Presentation

A multiple regression model comprising five variables was used for purposes of analysing data. The dependent variable in the model is Strategic decision making while the four independent variables were; organisation structure, top management, Organizational resources and organizational culture respectively.

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + e$

Where:

Y = is dependent variable (Strategic decision making) being predicted; X_1= Organisation structure; X_2= Top management characteristics; X_3= Organizational resources; X_4= Organizational culture; e= Error term; $\beta_0$is the constant term in the equation, while $\beta_{1,}$ $\beta_{2,}$ $\beta_{3,}$ and β_4 are coefficients of the independent variables. The analysed data was presented in form of diagrams, tables, charts, histograms and graphs.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was done to calculate Karl Pearson Correlation Coefficient between dependent variable (strategic decision making) and independent variables (organization structure, Top management characteristics, organizational resources and organizational culture). Correlation analysis was performed at 95% confidence level. The results were summarized and presented in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18: Correlation Coefficients

Independent variable	Karl Pearson coefficient	Interpretation	Significance level	Comment
Organization structure	0.853	High correlation	0.000	Significant
Top management characteristics	0.822	High correlation	0.000	Significant
Organizational resources	0.852	High correlation	0.000	Significant
Organizational culture	0.810	High correlation	0.000	Significant

Findings in Table 4.18 indicate that organization structure had a coefficient of 0.853 which signifies a high correlation between itself and strategic decision making at a significance level of 0.000. Top management characteristics with a correlation coefficient of 0.822 was found to be of high correlation at a significance level of 0.000 while organizational resources with correlation coefficient of 0.852 was considered high at a significance level of 0.000. This indicates that strategic decision making is highly correlated to organizational resources and organizational culture respectively. Organizational culture correlation coefficient of 0.810 was found to be high at a significance level of 0.000 and this indicates that organizational culture influences strategic decision making to a high extent. This therefore clearly demonstrates that all the independent variables significantly influenced strategic decision making.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression analysis was performed to determine the relative contribution of each of the four independent variables to strategic decision making. The results were summarized and presented in Table 4.23.

Table 4.23: Regression Coefficients

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Sig.
	β	Std. Error	
(Constant)	0.229		
Organization structure	0.535	0.027	0.011
Top management characteristics	0.302	0.105	0.021
Organizational resources	0.391	0.037	0.007
Organizational culture	0.106	0.090	0.019

The results shown in Table 4.23 indicate that all the independent variables (organization structure, Top management characteristics, organizational resources and organizational culture) had positive influence on strategic decision making in KCAA. Results show organization structure (X_1) with (β_1=0.535) which indicates its enormous contribution to strategic decision making followed by organizational resources (X_3) with (β_3=0.391), Top management characteristics (X_2) with (β_2=0.302) and last is organizational culture (X_4) with (β_4=0.106). All of these variables were significant at 95% confidence level. Therefore, the multiple linear regression model is; $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$

$$Y = 0.229 + 0.535X_1 + 0.302X_2 + 0.391X_3 + 0.106X_4 + \varepsilon$$

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the findings

Influence of Organization Structure on Strategic Decision Making

The study revealed that Organization Structure had the greatest positive influence on Strategic Decision Making. The key values noted to exert influence include hierarchies of decision making process, perceived higher positions held by staff, and new recruitment. Further, the high correlation coefficient was indicative of the strong relationship between Organization Structure and Strategic Decision Making while R^2 depicted a high explanatory power of the variable of Organization Structure on Strategic Decision Making.

Influence of Top Management Characteristics on Strategic Decision Making

That Top management characteristics highly influenced strategic decision making relative to other independent variables. Employees agreed that Top Management Characteristics play a vital role in influencing Strategic Decision Making. The key Top Management Characteristics factors considered during study included Top Management's Competence and Top Management's Support. The value of the correlation coefficient and R^2 square value denoted that overall Top Management Characteristics made a high contribution towards Strategic Decision Making.

Influence of Organizational Resources on Strategic Decision Making

That Organizational Resources had a significant positive influence on Strategic Decision Making with the respondents in agreement to the role Organizational Resources play in Strategic Decision Making. The key factors of Organizational Resources that were noted to exert high influence include training, skills and capabilities, Financial resources and Technological resources and capabilities.

Influence of Organizational Culture on Strategic Decision Making

That organizational culture positively influenced strategic decision making with respondents in agreement to the role organizational culture play in strategic decision making. Among the key Organizational Culture elements studied included Behavioral norms, Beliefs held by staff and set of values.

Conclusion of the study

The findings of the study affirmed existence of a significant positive relationship between the four key components of selected firm drivers namely; organization structure, Top Management Characteristics, Organizational Resources and Organizational Culture with Strategic Decision Making. The findings further indicated that of the four components, Organization Structure comparatively played a major role towards Strategic Decision Making, while the role played by Organizational Culture was the lowest. The findings of the study helped to demonstrate three things. First, the need for organizations to inculcate positive selected firm drivers for improved Strategic Decision Making. Second, the findings of study affirms that Organization Structure is one of the important factors which require to be considered in order to enhance Strategic Decision Making. To be successful in managing Strategic Decision Making, there is need for organizations to adopt policies which support development of an effective Strategic Decision Making.

Recommendations of the study

The study recommended that the management of organizations in Kenya should put in place high Organizational Structure Strategies as it leads to improved Strategic Decision Making. Organizations should ensure they have an effective Organization Structure in terms of power, hierarchies and recruitment in which all the Strategic Decision

Making processes can be well accommodated. The study also recommends that future scholars and researchers should aim to test the relationship between Organizational Structure and Strategic Decision Making using different sub constructs apart from hierarchies, power and recruitment. This can bring rigour and offer platforms for comparison of findings.

The study also recommends that organizations in Kenya should have an effective top management team. Organizations should ensure that the top management characteristics in terms of age, competence and support should be sufficient to allow for effective management of strategic decisions. The study also recommends that future researchers and scholars should find out the relationship between Top Management Characteristics and Strategic Decision Making using other variables apart from age, competencies and support.

The study recommends that organizations in Kenya should have adequate and efficient Organization Resources in place as it leads to the effective executions of the Strategic Decisions made. Organizations should ensure that Organizational Resources in terms of technological capabilities, human and financial resources are adequate and efficient so as to improve on strategic decision making.

Areas for further research

The current study focused on selected firm drivers and its influence on Strategic Decision Making with Kenya Civil Aviation Authority as the case study. It is recommended that future studies should seek to establish whether the same selected firm drivers components of Top Management Characteristics, Organization Structure, Organizational Resources and Organizational Culture are applicable to other organizations within Kenya and beyond. Second, as alluded in the first area of future research, the scope of this study focused on four components. There is need to carry out further studies to ascertain the influence on Strategic Decision Making of other components that are not covered under the current scope of study.

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