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# Impact of Digital Marketing on Aviation Businesses in Nigeria: (An Appraisal of 2000-2023)

**Olakulehin Tihamiyu Hammed<sup>1</sup>**

**Afolayan Isaac Olayinka<sup>2</sup>**

**Olagbemiro Josuha Olayemic<sup>3</sup>**

**Babalola Obasanjo James<sup>4\*</sup>**

Department of Transport Management<sup>2&4</sup>

Department of Marketing<sup>3</sup>

Department of Economics<sup>1</sup>

Faculty of Management Sciences,

Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, P. M. B. 4000, Ogbomoso, Nigeria.

\*E-mail: [ojbabalola@lautech.edu.ng](mailto:ojbabalola@lautech.edu.ng)

## Abstract

*The aviation industry encompasses almost all aspects of air travel and the activities that help to facilitate it. The blooming internet usage among the consumers has forced companies to target the market digitally. Social media marketing is a form of digital marketing that influences the power of widespread social media networks to reach the marketing and branding goals of the company. Airline industries are rigorously applying digital marketing tools and techniques to gain the ground among the competitors and serves as a crucial aspect for meeting consumer requirements and reinforce the relation among consumers in the airline industry. The study employed ex-post facto research design to analyze the impact of digital marketing on aviation businesses which will in turn lead to economic growth in Nigeria. Data for the study were sourced from Nigeria Civil aviation Authority (NCAA). The period of data collected covered for twenty-three years from 2000 to 2023. The results of the findings revealed that social media reach and website trafficking are stable in Nigeria, as all the variables seen by relatively high standard deviation. The outcome of the findings suggested that there are long run co-movement among aviation business and the e-ticketing among others as well as advert performance in Nigeria. Finally, there is a long-run causality jointly running from the digital marketing instruments at an adjustment speed of 25.74% annually.*

**Keyword: Aviation, Marketing, E-ticketing, Social media, Website trafficking**

## Introduction

Digital marketing is the promotion of brands to connect with potential customers using the internet and other forms of digital communication. Digital marketing is the use of websites, applications, mobile devices, social media, search engines, and other digital means to promote and sell products and services. Digital marketing involves many of the same principles as traditional marketing and is often considered an additional way for companies and organizations to approach consumers or customers and understand their behavior (Olabode, 2024). Companies often combine traditional and digital marketing techniques in their strategies. But digital marketing also comes with its own set of challenges. Digital marketing is the promotion and marketing of goods and services to consumers through digital channels and electronic technologies. These digital channels can include the internet, mobile devices, social media platforms, webinars, search engines, online customer communities and other digital platforms. Digital marketing also includes a range of approaches and tactics to reach and persuade the target audience through digital media, including email marketing, social

media marketing (Yuniarti *et al.*, 2024), search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing and online advertising.

Nigeria's economy is one of the biggest on the continent, and like all other economic industries, the aviation industry is one of the most rewarding for investors. The growing demand for aviation services in Nigeria has encouraged many airlines to establish or plan to establish operations in Nigeria. The aviation industry encompasses almost all aspects of air travel and the activities that help to facilitate it. This means it includes the entire airline industry, aircraft manufacturing, research companies, military aviation, and much more. With the continuous growth and challenges in the industry, the Nigerian aviation industry is expected to experience significant improvements in terms of development, infrastructure, safety, and security. In 2022, the industry experienced a lot of developments as it worked to overcome various challenges. A very notable development is the assent of the Civil Aviation Act, 2022 by President Muhammadu Buhari. Some of the prominent airlines in aviation businesses in Nigeria are, Air-Peace, Aero Contractors, Overland Airways, Arik Air, Azman Air, Med-View, Dana Air Ibom among others. In the Airline industry, the primary source of revenue comes from ticket sales and passenger-related services. Airlines generate income through ticket bookings, seat reservations, baggage fees, in-flight services, and other passenger-centric offerings (Banerji *et al.*, 2023).

The blooming internet usage among the consumers has forced companies to target the market digitally. Social media marketing is a form of digital marketing that influences the power of widespread social media networks to reach the marketing and branding goals of the company (Word-stream). The digital marketing tools and techniques have gained such importance that it has become extremely important for companies to provide a positive and long-lasting impression on the minds of the customers thereby, building the brand image of the company. Organizations of all sizes started to immensely trust on social media and accomplish activities to carry conversations and involve with their customers in order to develop brand consciousness, develop robust and healthy brand individuality and lastly grow sales (Samotalkova, 2019).

In recent years the online marketing concept has evolved which have been found to be more effective than conventional marketing techniques for developing a sense of belief for the brand and the buying intent among the consumers (Seo & Park, 2018). Digital marketing has a significant role in communicating the brand name of the company to the consumers. For promoting the brand name of the company, digital marketing carries out different activities by using mobile applications, web and other new media platforms. Interactive marketing, online marketing, e-marketing and web marketing are the other alternative terms used for digital marketing (Altindal, 2013). Digitization and new technologies have enabled marketers to formulate various campaigning programs to be closer to the consumers. The campaigning programs may be like advertising from the database to a specific segment, advertisement using digital tapes, advertisement containing quality messages, popular advertisements, interactive and gaming advertisements and many more (Karaagaoglu & Cicek, 2019). Airline industries are rigorously applying digital marketing tools and techniques to gain the ground among the competitors. Digital marketing has been a crucial aspect for meeting consumer requirements and reinforce the relation among consumers in the airline industry. Consumers avail digital techniques of services during the process of booking with the help of phones, through mobile devices, various processes of check and check out at the airport and even during the time of accessing to hotels (Saunders, 2016).

## **Literature Review**

## Digital marketing

According to Kulav and Mihaylov (2018), digital marketing refers to the use of digital technology by companies to advertise their goods and services to clients virtually. Technology-related devices like computers, phones, and the internet play a significant role in people's daily lives. Digital platforms have made a wide range of products available to consumers. Businesses use digital marketing to give their customers a lot of advantages. Beyond internet marketing, digital marketing has developed a few tactics. Digital marketing features include things like billboard visual ads, text messaging transmitted to mobile phones, television commercials, and different posters. Every day, more and more consumers are making purchases online (Shaddiq *et al.*, 2021). In the realm of digital marketing, businesses establish their own shared values in order to create an economic market. It is critical that consumers promote the goods they purchase. Providing the customers with information about the product guarantees their satisfaction and the company's trust. Thus, the company's digital marketing operates as a client-to-client exchange (Krabalt, 2022).

In "A Study of the Use of Digital Marketing Tools," Low *et al.* (2020) investigate how airline firms use these technologies and how they support their strategic marketing operations. According to the report, airline firms make considerable use of digital marketing technologies, which are crucial in aiding their strategic marketing initiatives. Tümer *et al.* 2019, studied Digital Marketing in the Airline Industry: A Study of the Impact on Customer Engagement and Loyalty," looks at how digital marketing tactics used by airlines affect patron age loyalty. According to the report, airline firms benefit from increased consumer loyalty as a result of digital marketing, which boosts their market share and competitive advantage. According to the findings, there are significant benefits and a critical link between digital marketing and strategic management in the aviation industry. It has been demonstrated that digital marketing increases consumer loyalty, expands market participation and gives airline companies a competitive advantage (OH & Park, 2020).

The impact of airline firms' digital marketing activities on customer experience and loyalty is examined by Ha (2021) study, "Digital Marketing in the Aviation Industry: Customer Experience and Loyalty." The report claims that airline businesses' use of digital marketing improves customer satisfaction and increases customer loyalty. A research by Chen *et al.* (2021) titled "Digital Marketing and Strategic Management in the Aviation Industry: The Case of an Enterprise" examined the enterprise's use of these strategies. By boosting market share, improving consumer loyalty and obtaining a competitive edge, the study finds that digital marketing helps businesses achieve these goals. In order to attain these advantages, the company also uses strategic management. It has been shown in multiple studies published in Turkish literatures that there are many advantages for the aviation industry from the interaction between digital marketing and strategic management (Florido-Benítez, 2022). Airlines may increase consumer's loyalty, increase their market share, and obtain a competitive advantage by leveraging digital marketing. Businesses must use strategic management techniques in order to achieve these objectives.

Airlines gather information about their customers' call and payment histories, baggage delivery records, departure, arrival times and dates, sales during flights and duty-free purchases, food preferences during flights, hotel reservations and rental car information (Nhamo *et al.*, 2020). These records are then analyzed and tailored products are presented to specific customer segments. It is well recognized that modern technologies improve marketing studies in addition to offering tailored products. Toubes *et al.* (2021) states that it is possible to assess the travel

preferences of customers and in the event that a country is searched for, offer the customer a variety of options for inexpensive or promotional flights to countries of choice.

### **Mobile Applications**

By examining the examples provided by the airline firms, these digital implementations are shown generally from a broad viewpoint. Airlines use a lot of different digital marketing techniques. The most popular method of managing consumer relationships is email marketing. Utilizing customer relationship management systems, airline businesses can divide target audience lists and offer highly focused campaigns to clients who are willing to reply (Okpara, 2020). Based on the customer's past purchases, specific promos may be offered in email dispatches. Email marketing for airlines is governed by a number of factors. Customers are more likely to do their hardest to spend their vacation in warmer locations, for instance, in email marketing sent out during the winter.

One of the best methods for attracting new clients, retaining current ones, building brand awareness, promoting products, sharing campaigns, learning more about the customers through forms filled out. Even while more than 92% of emails were utilized for marketing in 2010, social networks became more popular, direct messaging programs were used extensively and the quantity of unsolicited messages rose (Tucker, 2014). With the advent of mobile devices, email marketing has once again become an efficient means of communication and advertisement.

The company's website receives more clicks when its customers receive electronics-newsletters, campaigns and email incentives. Because customer information is captured, the target audience receives the appropriate message at a cheap cost and feedback is easily monitored (Karaağaoğlu & Çiçek, 2019). Because the single click rate on airline emails is 72% greater than that of other emails, they are a very successful tool for building consumer loyalty (Polat, 2022). Using social networks, online forums, blogs, wikis and other collaborative media for sales, marketing, and customer support is known as social media marketing (Alashe, 2021). Businesses can use additional media, such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn and Flickr to communicate with their customers more effectively, claimed Kumar and Singh (2020).

Today, the presence of a company in social media is a necessary channel for the company's promotion, information transmission and interaction with the customer. In the airline sector, a new concept called "Social Seating" developed by (Karaağaoğlu & Çiçek, 2019). Airline companies can now free their customers to choose their companions who share social media profiles. These social networks are welcomed intensely for those who want to experience this preference in the airline sector, but also bring the risks of discrimination on issues such as race and gender in terms of the Social Seating Concept. The website, which is now used as an active business tool, is seen as an open store that works effectively. It is a platform designed to make advertising and marketing of companies. Having an easy to use website, understandable menus, effective design, constantly updated and satisfying content, easy-to-download sites such as an effective web page marketing issues are important for customers' preferences. The quality of the products and services provided on the website and the convergence with the target audience are also important points for easy communication and interactive web site marketing (Alashe, 2021).

Online reservations and ticket purchases are another method that airline companies communicate with their clientele (Bawa *et al.*, 2018). These procedures not only enhance the

client experience but also give the business access to a sizable customer database that contains data for upcoming marketing initiatives. Mobile advertising, which encompasses marketing initiatives to reach consumers through mobile networks (smartphones, personal digital assistants, etc.) via a non-fixed network, is characterized as an excessive and frequent simultaneous interaction that exhibits features like user control, concurrency management, connectivity, game play and two-way communication. Today's advertising world relies heavily on mobile applications, which are primarily utilized on mobile phones. This is because they facilitate direct communication between marketing managers and customers (Jayaram *et al.*, 2015).

The primary form of mobile marketing is mobile phone applications, which are observed to increase customer loyalty by making transactions like booking, online check-in and ticket searching more user-friendly and quick (Karaağaoğlu & Çiçek, 2019). Numerous airline firms face harsh criticism about their use of stored passenger information. The airlines want to provide you a better experience. It's possible that the flight attendants' knowledge of the passengers' nationality, allergies, and other details is limited to the food service industry. One may argue that product pricing methods are influenced by digital initiatives. It makes sense that airlines that efficiently employ digital marketing would be one step ahead of the competition given the abundance of busy routes, consumer payment habits, season status and other variables influencing ticket costs.

### Methodology

The study employed ex-post facto research design to analyze the impact of digital marketing on aviation businesses which will in turn lead to economic growth in Nigeria. Data for the study were sourced from Nigeria Civil aviation Authority (NCAA). The period of data collected covered for twenty-three years from 2000 to 2023. The exogenous variables for the study were electronic ticketing (ET), return on investment (ROI), website trafficking (WT), customer retention rate (CRR), email marketing metrics (EM), social media reach (SMR), and advert performance (AD). The endogenous variable, aviation businesses (ABU) was used to test each of the independent variables to ascertain their effects.

The model for this study is a prototype of early version of Moore (2012) and others to look at how digital marketing impact the performance of aviation businesses in Nigeria. The percentage of aviation businesses in Nigeria was expressed as functions of electronic ticketing (ET), return on investment (ROI), website trafficking (WT), customer retention rate (CRR), email marketing metrics (EM), social media reach (SMR), and advert performance (AD). Thus, the model is stated as:

$$ABU = \beta_1 + \alpha_i X + \mu \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Where *ABU* is the percentage aviation businesses;  $\beta_1$  is the constant;  $\alpha_i$  is the coefficients of the explanatory variables and control variable respectively; *X* is the vector of the exogenous variables; *Y* denotes the control variable; *Y* is the error term.

Thus, equation (1) can be rewrite to:

$$ABU = \beta_1 + \alpha_1 ET + \alpha_2 ROI + \alpha_3 WT + \alpha_4 CRR + \alpha_5 EM + \alpha_6 SMR + \alpha_7 AD + \mu \dots \dots \dots (2)$$

Where *ABU* is the percentage of aviation businesses; *ET* denotes e-ticketing; *ROI* represents return on investment; *WT* is the website trafficking; *CRR* denotes customer retention rate; *EM*

is the email marketing metrics; *SMR* denotes social media reach; *AD* is the advert performance; and  $\mu$  is the error term.

**Estimation Techniques and Strategy**

Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) was used as pre-estimation tool to test the stationarity of the data to avoid using a spurious data for analysis. Dickey-Fuller 1979 noted that time series data needs to be pre-tested to ascertain if it exhibits randomness that leads to white-noise before being used for estimation. A time series data is said to be white-noise if the variable is independent and identically distributed with mean zero. The aim of this work is to determine the short and long run impact of digital marketing on aviation businesses. To achieve this purpose, ARDL ECM (Autoregressive Distributive Lag Error Correction Model) was adopted for the study based on three main reasons. First it uses mixed integrated data, secondly, it is more efficient and offers better results for small set of data and thirdly, the long run results are unbiased (Harris & Sollis, 2003). The co-integration estimate was used to determine the presence of long run relationship in the model.

Using the ARDL ( $a, n1, n2, n3, \dots, nx$ ) specification ( $a$  is the lag order for the dependent variable (*GDP*) and  $n1, n2, n3, \dots, nx$  is lag orders for independent and control variable:

The models are specified as:

$$ABU = \beta_1 + \sum_{k=0}^{n1} \alpha_1 X + \mu \dots \dots \dots (3)$$

Where *ABU* is the percentage aviation business;  $\beta_1$  is the constant;  $\alpha_1$  and  $\alpha_2$  are the coefficients of the explanatory variables; *X* is the vector of the exogenous variables;  $\mu$  is the error term. Thus, the model is stated as:

$$\begin{aligned} DABU = & \beta_2 + \lambda_2 TREND + \sum_{k=0}^a \beta_{21} ABU_{-1} + \sum_{k=0}^{n1} \beta_{22} DET_{-1} + \sum_{k=0}^{n2} \beta_{23} DROI_{-1} \\ & + \sum_{k=0}^{n3} \beta_{24} DWT_{-1} + \sum_{k=0}^{n4} \beta_{25} DCRR_{-1} + \sum_{k=0}^{n5} \beta_{26} DEM_{-1} + \sum_{k=0}^{n4} \beta_{27} DSMR_{-1} \\ & + \sum_{k=0}^{n5} \beta_{28} DAD_{-1} + \lambda_{21} ABU_{-1} + \lambda_{22} ET_{-1} + \lambda_{23} ROI_{-1} + \lambda_{24} WT_{-1} + \lambda_{25} CRR_{-1} + \\ & \lambda_{26} EM_{-1} + \lambda_{27} SMR_{-1} + \lambda_{28} AD_{-1} \mu_2 \dots \dots \dots (4) \end{aligned}$$

Where *ABU* is the percentage of aviation businesses; *ET* denotes e-ticketing; *ROI* represents return on investment; *WT* is the website trafficking; *CRR* denotes customer retention rate; *EM* is the email marketing metrics; *SMR* denotes social media reach; *AD* is the advert performance; and  $\mu$  is the error term.

**Table 1.1 Definition of variables and Apriori expectation**

VARIABLE	DEFINITION	EXPECTATTION/SIGN
<i>ABU</i> (aviation businesses)	The outcomes or performance of the aviation businesses that are influenced by a range of independent variables. Thus, this variable is captured by overall growth of aviation businesses in Nigeria	Positive and significant
<i>ET</i> denotes e-ticketing	The use of digital systems for issuing, managing and processing tickets impact aviation businesses.	Positive and significant
<i>ROI</i> represents return on investment	The financial metric used to evaluate the efficiency or profitability of Aviation business	Positive and significant

<i>WT</i> is the website trafficking	The percentage of customers that visit and booking the ticket through the website	Positive and significant
<i>EM</i> represent email marketing metrics;	This measures the effectiveness and success of email marketing advertisement and campaigns of the Aviation Business	Positive and significant
<i>SMR</i> denotes social media reach	This refers to the percentage of customers who engaged on aviation businesses that are influenced through the contents of Aviation business on the social media	Positive and significant
<i>AD</i> is the advert performance	The percentage of the customers got information on aviation business activities through the advertisement	Positive and significant

Source: Authors Field Survey, 2024.

## Empirical Result

Table 1.2: Descriptive Statistics

TESTS	ABU	EM	ET	ROI	SMR	WT
Mean	11.24976	13.93750	2.286167	43.51750	9.212500	30.40486
Median	11.36689	13.50000	1.830037	42.65000	7.950000	24.49022
Maximum	11.90162	26.00000	18.05893	81.42000	50.00000	87.76135
Minimum	10.14651	6.000000	-6.811273	25.00000	1.000000	6.724867
Std. Dev.	0.479075	4.362794	5.728751	13.49894	9.273680	18.43268
Skewness	-0.969416	0.571586	0.794652	0.834343	3.682785	1.469812
Kurtosis	3.048844	4.055512	3.761265	3.764895	17.05454	5.135355
Jarque-Bera	3.761454	2.420949	3.105412	3.369575	251.7816	13.20113
Probability	0.152479	0.298056	0.211674	0.185484	0.000000	0.001360
Sum	269.9941	334.5000	54.86800	1044.420	221.1000	729.7166
Sum Sq. Dev.	5.278795	437.7813	754.8275	4191.089	1978.026	7814.564
Observations	24	24	24	24	24	24

Source: Authors Field Survey, 2024.

The outcomes of the descriptive statistical analysis showed in Table 1 above demonstrated that all the variables' means tend toward maximum values except-ticketing, indicating that their average values are high. The mean values of all the variables except ABU resulted in a considerable degree of divergence from the actual data, as seen by the relatively high standard deviation of all the variables. All the variable means are more closely related to their maximum values than their minimum values excepte-ticketing which are closer to the minimum than the maximum. The standard deviation, which deviates greatly from the mean, provides strong support for the assertion. These findings demonstrated that all the variables excluding social media reach and website trafficking are stable in Nigeria.

## Unit root Test

Table 1.3: Panel unit root tests for Anglophone countries

Variables	ABU	ET	ROI	SMR	EM	WT
Series	Level	Level	1 <sup>st</sup> Diff	1 <sup>st</sup> Diff	1 <sup>st</sup> Diff	1 <sup>st</sup> Diff.
ADF	-3.900886**	5.724001*	-6.224267*	-4.066918*	-6.625870*	-3.487436**



Order of Integration	I(0)	I(0)	I(1)	I(1)	I(1)	I(0)
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Source: Authors Field Survey, 2024.

Notes: An intercept and trend are included in the test equation. The lag length was selected using the Schwarz Information Criterion. (\*), (\*\*), (\*\*\*) denote probability statistical significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% levels respectively.

The outcomes of the unit root tests are presented in Table 2. Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) was employed at the 1%, 5%, and 10% significant levels. Except for *ABU*, *ET* and *WT*, which were significance at levels, all other variables were significant at first difference. This demonstrates that every variable is integrated with order one except for *ABU*, *ET* and *WT*, which are integrated with order Zero.

### Co-integration Test

Table 1.4: F-Bound Cointegration Test

Dependent Variable	(ABU)
F-Statistics (5% sig. level)	3.857918
I(0) Bound	2.45
I(1) Bound	3.61
Decision	There is Co-integration

Source: Authors Field Survey, 2024.

The results of co-integration are demonstrated in Table 3 above. The results indicated that there are long run co-integrating movements among all the variables. The outcome suggested there are long run co-movement among Aviation Business and the e-ticketing, return on investment, website trafficking, customer retention rate, email marketing metrics, social media reach, and advert performance in Nigeria.

### Discussion of the Result

Table 1.5: Results of ARDL estimates

Short run effect			
variables→	Coefficients	Std. Err	P-values
DABU	.6017226	.51464	0.242
DEM	.0001234	.0000793	0.105
DET	.1120702	.1163409	0.335
DROI	.1294019	.1287545	0.315
DSMR	.8204026	.8184718	0.316
DWT	.0046096	.0040324	0.254
Speed of Adjustment			
COINTEQ01	-.2574114	.1173234	0.000
Long run effect			
EM	0.035557	0.013978	0.031
ET	0.021343	0.016954	0.000
ROI	0.024188	0.014125	0.028
SMR	0.015030	0.015594	0.014
WT	0.001272	0.002943	0.042

Source: Authors Field Survey, 2024.

The result of the impact of digital marketing on Aviation Business in Nigeria is presented in Table 5. From the Table, in the short run, all the exogenous variables, that is, email marketing,

e-ticketing, return on investment, social media reach, and website trafficking, all have positive and insignificant impacts on Aviation Businesses in Nigeria. Hence, digital marketing has no significant positive impact on aviation businesses in Nigeria. This may be as a result of asymmetric information and low level of awareness among Nigerians.

Meanwhile, in the long run, all the independent variables that is, email marketing, e-ticketing, return on investment, social media reach, and website trafficking, all have significant positive impact on aviation business in Nigeria. Thus, digital marketing has positive and significant impact on aviation business in Nigeria which will in turn promote Nigeria economic growth. This is true of that the information and the awareness on the digital marketing has spread among the people the country and as such, it promotes the aviation businesses which lead to increase in economic growth in Nigeria.

Also, the result showed that there is a long-run association among aviation businesses and digital marketing instruments. There is a long-run causality jointly running from the digital marketing instruments and aviation business in Nigeria. This implies that the errors in problems in the Aviation Business in the current year will be corrected by the digital marketing instruments at an adjustment speed of 25.74% annually.

## Post estimation results

**Table 1.6: Post estimation**

<b>Residual normality Test</b>		
	<b>Jarque Bera</b>	<b>Prob.</b>
<b>ABU</b>	0.529251	0.634116
<b>Serial correlation Test</b>		
	<b>F-statistic</b>	<b>Obs*R-squared</b>
<b>ABU</b>	0.356096 (0.7040)	0.922224 (0.6306)

**Source: Authors Field Survey, 2024.**

The result of residual diagnostics demonstrated in Table 6 above showed that the residuals from the two models are normally distributed as showed by the probability level of the Jarque-Bera statistics. The results also showed that the errors in the models are not serially correlated.

## Conclusion and Recommendation

The study's findings indicate that the aviation industry in Nigeria is positively and marginally impacted by all of the exogenous variables, including social media reach, email marketing, e-ticketing, return on investment, and website trafficking. Additionally, all marketing indices and the aviation industry have long-term co-movements that contribute to the performance of advertisements in the Nigerian aviation sector. Ultimately, a long-term causation originates from the digital marketing tools at an annual adjustment speed of 25.74%. According to the research, aviation companies should consider alternative marketing strategies in the event of internet outages or cyber-attacks.

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