
Authenticity in Intangible Heritage as a Key to the Development of Tourism Products: Theoretical Frameworks from Poland

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Abstract:

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to characterize the authenticity of intangible cultural heritage in the context of local, regional and traditional products and their role in the development of tourism offerings. The paper defines key concepts such as cultural heritage, authenticity and local, regional and traditional products.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A literature review and analysis of phenomena related to food adulteration and its impact on perceptions of authenticity were conducted

Findings: The results indicate that authenticity is an important factor influencing consumers' and tourists' perception of product quality. The authors also stressed the importance of protecting and promoting authentic products, which enhances local identity and tourism development. The article provides a theoretical basis for activities for sustainable development of heritage-based tourism.

Practical Implications: The article turns its attention to the authenticity of heritage in the creation of tourism products. The right approach to this issue can inspire tour operators to create tourism offers based on authentic local, regional and traditional products, highlighting their unique features and links to history and culture. These resources can become an effective tool for promoting cultural heritage. Traditional products can serve as a basis for implementing support programs for local producers, which will enable them to develop production in accordance with traditional methods and obtain certificates confirming the authenticity of products, which can lead to increased competitiveness of tourist regions. With proper consumer education on the topic analyzed in the article, there will be an increase in consumer awareness of product authenticity and the benefits of choosing local and traditional products.

Originality/Value: The article provides theoretical and practical guidance for decision-makers and tourism organizers, contributing to a better understanding of the importance of authenticity in building competitive tourism offers. Moreover, it brings a new perspective to

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the analysis of the authenticity of intangible cultural heritage, highlighting its relationship with local, regional and traditional products as key elements in tourism development.

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1. Introduction

The uniqueness and existence of a “natural link” between a region (its climate, soil, flora and fauna) and traditional eating patterns, local gastronomic culture guarantees the authenticity of local, regional and traditional products offered on the market. It is the authenticity of local food that can be one of the dominant attributes that influence the quality of the products offered and the perception of tourists, who are motivated to travel precisely by these gastronomic attractions.

However, insensitive producers hoping for a quick profit adulterate and counterfeit these foods, misleading consumers. In the European Union, as well as in Poland, appropriate institutions have been set up to “guard” the integrity of producers of local, regional and traditional products, and yet their fakery happens all the time. This fact clearly shows that this is a market where there is money to be made, and despite the protection, dishonest manufacturers cheat buyers.

The object of the article is to characterize authenticity tied to the issue of origin and production of intangible cultural heritage products, which can become an element of a tourist product. The paper characterizes the concepts of cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage, authenticity and local, regional and traditional products. Also described is the issue of why these products are worth using in creating an offer for visitors to a tourist destination. This study has a theoretical-review character, and to realize the research problem the method of literature analysis was chosen, in which selected scientific, scientific-popular publications and information from the Internet treating issues identical or related to the chosen topic were used. On the other hand, the descriptive method was used to analyze the research problem.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Intangible Cultural Heritage

Previous generations have inherited a particular type of heritage, namely cultural, scientific and artistic goods. However, it is difficult to look for a single, generally accepted definition of this concept in the literature, as it all depends on how one understands the issue (Legutko-Kobus, 2016).

Local heritage is what a person and, more broadly, a local community live in, and in short, it is material and spiritual value. It is something that has been inherited from previous generations, but also the achievements of the present time, which will be bequeathed to the next generation. In the collection of local heritage, two specific subsets can be distinguished:

- natural heritage, which includes unique formations of animate or inanimate nature. These also include elements of the environment that may be threatened by the extinction of animal and plant species, as well as areas of high value for nature conservation and aesthetic and/or scientific value;
- cultural heritage, which includes monuments, buildings and objects that have historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological or anthropological value (Jęczmyk *et al.*, 2020).

Both types of heritage: cultural and natural, are priceless and irreplaceable resources, important not only from the point of view of any society, nation, but also of all mankind. Thus, natural heritage will be natural elements such as rare and beautiful natural sites of high aesthetic, cultural and scientific value, preserved in their most natural state and form, which may be in both animate and inanimate forms. They are often considered a natural attraction that also includes its wider natural surroundings. These sites are prohibited from activities that would disturb the natural conditions or adversely affect their aesthetic value.

As for cultural heritage, its understanding has been changing over the decades. The first considerations of cultural heritage appeared on the grounds of philosophy, historic preservation and conservation theory. From the perspective of philosophy, the issue under discussion is treated in the category of a monument, a work of art, which is primarily a direct source of artistic, aesthetic and moral values, which largely affect the quality of life, and thus testify to the development of the communities in which they function (Góral, 2014).

Cultural heritage has been systematically permeating for many years from the conservation community, closely related to the protection of monuments and mementos of the past, to the scientific debate in the field of socio-economic development. It has a semantic beginning with the notion of “monument,” which should have the appropriate nobility, time caesura, but also scientific, artistic or historical value (Kozioł, 2021).

It is not only a product of past, previous generations, but it is also a product of the present, as it is read (interpreted) contemporarily, becoming a contemporary social construct, still attributed to new phenomena of the past (Kobyliński, 2011). Thus, among cultural heritage, two types can be distinguished:

- tangible cultural heritage: movable monuments (i.e., those that can theoretically be moved, such as a coin or a ring) and immovable monuments (i.e., those that cannot theoretically be moved, such as a manor house, a castle, a church);

- intangible cultural heritage, which is more intangible: knowledge, skills, practices, ideas, values, ideas, messages, related objects (e.g., Easter palms), or places (e.g., an artist's workshop) (Zarzycka, 2016).

The first group, or tangible components of cultural heritage, are easy to describe and locate, but are often in very poor condition. This can include: castles, castle ruins, barrows, burial mounds, palaces, mansions, religious buildings, residential houses, farm buildings, agricultural industry buildings, technical heritage, small architecture, objects and tools, agricultural tools and machinery, etc. This type of heritage should also include the landscape, the skyline of a given place (village, town or city) of a town, i.e., the spatial layout (greenery, fields, water, buildings, roads, engineering structures), as they are the result of human interaction with the environment that has lasted for centuries (Jęczyk *et al.*, 2020).

The second group, the intangible components of cultural heritage, is an important element of national heritage, such as history and culture. It manifests itself in the following areas, among others:

- traditions and oral transmissions (e.g., fables, proverbs, songs, oracles, memorial and belief stories, histories, funeral laments speeches, pastoral and trade calls), including language as a vehicle of intangible cultural heritage;
- performing arts and musical traditions (e.g., vocal, instrumental and dance traditions; religious, carnival and annual performances);
- socio-cultural practices (e.g., customs, rituals and annual, situational and family rituals: baptisms, weddings, funerals; local and community ceremonies; customs of indulgences and pilgrimages; games and plays; children's folklore; ways of celebrating; practices for establishing interpersonal relationships, such as in ways of making wishes);
- knowledge and practices relating to nature and the universe (e.g., traditional ideas about the universe; folk meteorology; traditional ways of farming; traditional ways of healing; persuasions: amorous, medical);
- knowledge and skills related to traditional crafts (Adamowski and Smyk, 2013).

This is a very diverse and capacious category at the same time, which should include manifestations of local tradition, ranging from oral transmissions and song and music traditions, to traditional crafts and handicrafts cultivated in the community, to culinary traditions or customary ideas about the world (Chabiera, Koziół, and Skaldawski, 2019). This type of heritage is passed down from generation to generation and continuously recreated by different groups in society in relation to their environment, history and relationship to nature. For a community, intangible heritage is a source of a sense of identity and continuity. This type of cultural heritage should be consistent with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect between communities, groups and individuals and sustainable development (Lenzerini, 2011).

2.2 Authenticity of Intangible Cultural Heritage

There are several main factors that are particularly important for a full understanding of the significance and value of intangible cultural heritage, and these are in particular:

- self-recognition of intangible cultural heritage by the communities, groups and individuals concerned as part of their cultural heritage;
- the continuous reproduction of intangible cultural heritage in response to the historical and social evolution of the communities and groups concerned;
- the deep connection between heritage and the individual identity of its creators and bearers;
- the condition of “authenticity” as an implicit requirement of intangible cultural heritage;
- the deep connection of intangible cultural heritage with human rights, from a dual perspective: human rights standards as a parameter of “legitimacy” of the heritage in question, and the other as a tool to promote the actual enjoyment of human rights. The above factors are strongly interrelated (Lenzerini, 2011).

The treaty that introduced the legal, administrative and financial framework for the protection of this type of heritage was the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in 2003. Intangible cultural heritage represents not only inherited traditions from the past, but also contemporary rural and urban practices involving diverse cultural groups. To highlight and emphasize the importance of this type of heritage, the Convention establishes two lists:

- List of intangible heritage in urgent need of protection in order to take appropriate conservation measures,
- Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which aims to draw more attention to intangible cultural heritage and raise a stronger awareness of its importance (Zarzycka, 2016).

In Poland, the register of intangible heritage is the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which includes those items that meet certain criteria, but also those submitted by the community.

Intangible cultural heritage encompasses traditions inherited from ancestors, which are passed on in the process of intergenerational transmission. It plays a very important role in the construction and reinforcement of personal and social identity, but also manifests itself in the daily adoption of cultural practices that are recognized by members of a community (Brzezińska, 2021). Like natural resources, it can be used in a variety of ways by humans in their activities, both productive and consumptive, which is why the so-called use value of heritage is often emphasized (Góral, 2014).

Intangible heritage has gained international recognition as an important factor in cultural identity, promotion of creativity and preservation of cultural diversity. It plays an essential role in national and international development, tolerance and harmonious interaction between cultures. In the era of globalization, many forms of this heritage are threatened by cultural standardization, armed conflicts, the development of mass tourism, industrialization, exodus from the countryside, migration and environmental degradation (Lenzerini, 2011).

Authenticity is the core value of cultural heritage and plays an important and special role in its protection, and represents its value and attractiveness (Hu *et al.*, 2019). The rich cultural diversity of mankind is gradually and dangerously moving toward uniformity, which can cause a special threat to the authenticity of cultural heritage.

Experts from various fields are undertaking a discussion on the issue of “authenticity” because it is an interdisciplinary topic. Their task is to study it only qualitatively (Ehteshami and Soltaninejad, 2020). As defined in the Nara Document on Authenticity (Nara, 1994), all activities related to the protection and care of heritage are related to this issue, the purpose of which is to understand cultural heritage, to know its history and meaning, to guarantee its material preservation and, if required, its presentation, restoration and consolidation of its value (Piotrowska, Lipska, 2015). It was a response to the problems arising in connection with cultural heritage around the world and to draw attention to the importance of authenticity in the case of a cultural heritage resource.

So what is authenticity? As Nowacki (2013) explains, the term comes from the Greek - *authentikos* and is translated, as guaranteed. It means true, real and consistent with the original. It identifies truth as the opposite of falsehood, true rather than false, original rather than copy, honest versus corrupt, sacred rather than profane. However, authenticity and its defining criteria are in fact in constant flux (Lowenthal, 1999). One can try to explain this concept as meaning truthfulness, originality, credibility, conformity to history, tradition, culture and heritage (Kozień, 2018).

Cohen and Cohen (2012) propose two types of authenticity: cold and hot. According to it, cold authenticity refers to the description of objective facts about the visited area and has a one-time and official character, and takes the form of certification, while the other - hot authenticity - is the experience of the subject and is formed on the basis of subjective view and critical evaluation of the visited place, has a recurrent and informal character, and its existence depends on repeated authentication. It is the process of creating, preserving and reinforcing the authenticity of an object or phenomenon. Unlike cold authentication, which is characterized by stagnation and ossification, hot authentication is transformative (Machowska, 2016).

The word authenticity itself to cultural heritage issues was introduced by UNESCO in Issues arising in connection with the implementation of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 1977), which then led to a long process leading to the Nara Document on Authenticity (Nara, 1994), preceding the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Through the Nara Document on Authenticity, UNESCO recognized that different cultures have different ways of understanding authenticity (Lo Iacono, 2024). UNESCO lists the following indicators of authenticity, which are:

- form and design, materials and substances, use and function, traditions management methods and systems, location and surroundings, language and other forms of intangible heritage, atmosphere and feelings, other internal/external factors (Szmygin, 2016).

Heritage is a process focused on change, choice, acceptance and rejection by individuals or groups who decide what they want to remember, what they want to be attached to, and ultimately, what to care for, protect and pass on to future generations. This causes an important aspect of heritage to be its socialization, i.e., the right to assign meanings and values to cultural heritage, which has been granted to the societies that inhabit the area or are emotionally connected to it (Kozioł, 2021). It is much easier to determine the authenticity of tangible cultural heritage, while intangible cultural heritage is constantly reproduced and therefore cannot be viewed in light of historical authenticity, which was understood as “static” (Jokilehto, 2006).

However, in this case, tourism can become a problem for the authenticity of such heritage. Tourism is even called “the virus of tourist mystification” (Hoffman, 2012), for the development of which the delicate line between the desire to preserve and promote regional heritage and that which stems from purely commercial motives is thus lost (Pabian, 2014). For profit and to achieve benefits of various types, especially financial, producers and manufacturers change ingredients from the traditional ones, often more expensive, to cheaper and more readily available ones.

3. Food – Intangible Cultural Heritage

3.1 Local, Regional and Traditional Food Products

Regional products are an indispensable part of culture. Local culinary tradition, culinary food products are one of the elements of intangible cultural heritage. Particularly important is their connection with local history and cultural heritage, as well as with the natural environment. Such products are mainly associated with food products, which are particularly promoted in Polish regions, but there are also other types of cultural products. They can be, for example: lace, embroidery, toys, etc. Traditional handicrafts and handicrafts are primarily a value sought after by interested members of society.

Consumers, who often change their place of residence, increasingly need to identify themselves with a particular region, they want to call one area their “small homeland”, which is facilitated by a common history, customs and traditions, still living legends and various local stories, as well as traditions and eating habits of the region. Local, regional and traditional products are an excellent consolidating element for people, but it is also a feature that is an attribute that makes it possible to apply territorial marketing to these products, as a way to promote a specific area - a province, municipality, city or village (Anculewicz, 2018).

In the case of these goods, the consumer can be defined as an investor who expects certain benefits from his own interests, the orientation of which becomes a condition for obtaining benefits from the opportunity to dispose of material cultural goods (Musialik and Śmietanki, 2019).

3.2 Adulteration of Local, Regional and Traditional Food Products

Food adulteration, including local, regional and traditional food products, is a common phenomenon. A product is considered to be adulterated if it misleads the consumer by covertly replacing a valuable ingredient with a less valuable or worthless one.

This leads to a change in the composition and properties of the product, which externally resembles the proper product, but in fact is not, and is considered counterfeit (Śmiechowska, 2013). It usually consists, for example, of replacing an ingredient with another ingredient, usually a cheaper one, or failing to declare the method of production, as well as incorrectly declaring the quantitative composition of the product or falsely declaring the origin of the product (Kaler, 2019). Food was adulterated in many ways and at every stage of production and manufacturing, but the constant in this arrangement was only the consumer, who lost not only money, but even sometimes his health (Ziółkowska and Ziółkowski, 2016).

Nowadays, for the production or marketing of an adulterated foodstuff, the Food and Nutrition Safety Act (Act, 2026) provides for a criminal sanction in the form of a fine, restriction of freedom or imprisonment for up to a year. However, if the value of a foodstuff is significant, its adulteration is punishable by imprisonment from six months to three years (Fogel, 2021).

Simple adulteration methods involving, for example, adding water to beer, wine, milk or juices are being replaced by increasingly specialized ones, such as grade adulteration of meat, fats, substitution of more expensive raw materials with cheaper ones, and many others, detectable only by highly specific analytical methods (Makala, 2013). The most commonly adulterated food products are oil, oils, honey, fruit and vegetable juices, milk and dairy products, meat and meat products, wines and other alcohols, coffee, tea, spices and traditional products. It is also adulteration in the manufacture of cured meats to substitute one kind of meat for another, or to freeze fish from offcuts or small pieces of fish instead of a whole fillet without

appropriate information on the label, which the consumer only becomes aware of after thawing the fish. Adding cow's milk to sheep's or goat's milk during the production of dairy products, mainly cheeses, can also be considered adulteration (Śmiechowska, 2013). Food adulteration is becoming a global problem, with fraud practices becoming increasingly sophisticated and detection methods inadequate (Tomaszewska-Gras, 2018).

First and foremost, consumers lose out on food adulteration, as they purchase an incomplete product, sometimes unfit for consumption, which poses a health risk. The gainers, on the other hand, are dishonest entrepreneurs, who generally adulterate food out of a desire to make more profit (Kowalska, 2016).

The reason for food adulteration is the desire to hang profit by lowering production costs, increasing the price competitiveness of the product, hiding the actual origin of the product, hiding the improper quality of the product, less often hiding errors in the technological process. The consequences of this action are felt both by consumers who buy incomplete, inauthentic products and by honest producers who lose in unfair competition (Ziółkowska and Ziółkowski, 2016). The problem of food fraud is dealt with by supervisory inspections i.e.:

- Trade Inspection operating within the structures of the Office of Competition and Competition Protection,
- Inspectorate for Commercial Quality of Agricultural and Food Articles.

These two institutions in Poland are set up, among other things, to fight food adulteration. The Trade Inspectorate conducts inspections at retail units and, when an adulteration is found, forwards the case to the Agricultural and Food Articles Trade Quality Inspectorate, which conducts on-site inspections (Kowalska, 2017). In addition, authorized certification bodies are authorized to conduct inspections and issue and revoke the certificate of conformity.

In the case of regional and traditional foods, having a certificate is important, because conducting food production in a certain way confirmed its quality and authenticity. Although on sale you can also find fakes that appear under the names of the originals, such as “rogali świętomarcińskie”, “obwarzanek krakowski” or “oscypek” or very much resemble these names.

3.3 Benefits of Offering Authentic Local Food Products

The competitiveness and tourist attractiveness of a given region is determined by a number of factors, including transportation accessibility, the state of the natural environment, and product offerings. Local products can create a market advantage for an area and influence the development of its tourism function (Nizoł, 2016). Substitute for off-site nutrition are all food services provided to visitors and tourists during their travel and stay in a tourist reception area. They determine the development of tourism, as they influence the volume of tourist traffic and the quality of service (Woźniczko, Jędrysiak, and Orłowski, 2015).

This is why gastronomy is such an important element of any trip, and culinary tourism has become one of the most dynamically developing segments of tourism (Jęczmyk and Kasprzak, 2017). The motive behind these trips is the desire to experience the taste of special foods or products that are associated with the place visited. This is learning about the culinary heritage of the place (Jęczmyk, 2016). Culinary tourism is referred to as any travel to food production sites, culinary festivals or restaurants to taste dishes or sample regional specialties (Kurek, 2008).

The products that are used to create the culinary dishes and products desired by tourists come from areas with special characteristics and qualities. The products and dishes offered to visitors are related to the way they are made, prepared, and their distinctive quality characteristics are determined by the geographic place where they are produced. This gives them a unique value and makes them authentic. This is especially tied to terroir, or terre - the land.

This relationship determines the specific characteristics of a place, in interaction with the genetics of plants in agricultural products such as wine, but also such as coffee, chocolate, tea and cheese (Marlowe and Bauman, 2019). The influence of a particular place on a product relates to geographic features (special emphasis is placed on the sun and microclimate: rain, wind, humidity, temperature changes, etc.) and geological features (soil, rocks, altitude, slope of a hill or terrain) (Jęczmyk, 2019). Consequently, a new form of tourism has emerged, namely terroir tourism, in which the unique terrain and its correlation with the product in question play an important role.

The direct link between the food on offer and its place of origin seems obvious, especially when considering rural areas, where the food product is created through breeding or cultivation (Kordowska, Kowalczyk, and Kulczyk, 2013). There is also a trend among tourists to seek and consume traditional, regional products unique to particular places.

Today's tourist often wants to travel off the beaten track and delve into authentic local culture, is interested in what is unique rather than mass, wants to experience and "taste." Increasingly, he is looking for products that have a history, are distinctive and unique to the area (Nizoł, 2016). The connection of the product with the region makes the purchase the beginning of contact with the specific history, tradition, culture, community and nature of the area. Recently, in many European countries, one can observe a strong tendency to emphasize one's own regional affiliation - the so-called "small homelands" are becoming increasingly important (Sokół and Kołosko-Chomentowska, 2010).

The development of these products is beneficial for environmental reasons, as natural environmental, economic and social resources are used. As a result:

- new companies are created that pay taxes to the municipality, new jobs are created, residents receive income, there is the realization of life goals of

residents, who gain interesting occupation, attachment to the region increases, which creates an opportunity to improve the economic situation in the region, while providing positive social and environmental effects (Grębowiec, 2010).

Elements of intangible cultural heritage that have social value can be:

- a catalyst for intergenerational communication and cooperation, a factor conducive to strengthening inter-neighborhood ties and counteracting alienation, a factor strengthening the sense of community, an effective carrier of positive social patterns, a factor initiating more formalized cooperation in the municipality, e.g.: between local government, NGOs, volunteers and community representatives, a catalyst for civic activity and entrepreneurship directed at caring for the common good, a factor positively influencing the quality of life of local residents, building their sense of pride and uniqueness of the place where they live, an educational resource for teaching civics and small homelands (Chabiera, Koziół, and Skaldawski 2019).

It is also worth noting the importance of the food products in question for the environment. The production of such goods is very often done according to old recipes, dating back to a time when there were no preservatives and a high chemicalization of the technological process, and therefore the technological process itself is not a threat to the environment. These products are often ecological in nature, as they are fully organic or made from raw materials produced in such a way (Minta, Tańska-Hus, and Nowak, 2013). The most important benefits of offering regional and traditional products and dishes include:

- building recognition of the region, enriching the gastronomic and tourist offer of the region, preserving traditional skills in the culinary arts, saving from oblivion many native specialties, their identification and inventory, to increase the profitability of food production by offering products with a well-known reputation and high quality, increasing the variety of products offered to the consumer, protecting local and regional identity, educating consumers, promoting local supply chains, which reduces the carbon footprint and promotes environmental protection.

4. Conclusion

The authenticity of intangible cultural heritage, including local, regional and traditional products, plays a key role in shaping tourist attractiveness and building the identity of local communities. Preserving and protecting these resources is becoming a challenge, especially in an era of globalization and increasing commercialization. However, a responsible approach that takes into account both cultural values and market needs can benefit all stakeholders.

Promoting authentic local and traditional products can contribute to the economic development of regions, increase environmental awareness and strengthen intergenerational ties. It is therefore necessary to continue efforts to promote and protect these goods, both locally and internationally. Of key importance here are consumer education, product certification and support for producers to ensure that authentic cultural heritage not only survives, but becomes a source of pride and prosperity for future generations.

Developing tourism based on authentic cultural heritage requires cooperation between local communities, authorities and international organizations. Only through joint efforts can a balance be achieved between preserving tradition and adapting it to modern realities, creating sustainable and valuable tourism products. The diversity of local products is very wide, as evidenced by the remarkable number of traditional cheeses, meats, beverages, oils, cakes, or fruits and vegetables offered on the market. They are bound by the place of manufacture, the specific way they are produced, resulting in an inextricable link of quality, origin and reputation, as well as just authenticity.

The products in question are not cheap, and often dishonest producers by changing their ingredients or the way they are produced want them to be cheaper, therefore more competitive and more consumers to buy them. Such actions represent an unfair commercial advantage for local producers, and at the same time are a way to deceive the consumer. Manufacturers of such products should seek to “authenticate” their product, which would give buyers confidence that the product is original and in keeping with tradition. One may be concerned that in the case of the current economic conditions, producers may focus mainly on material benefits while overlooking tradition and links to the region's culture.

Tourists are looking for traditional products while being “inundated” with mass, “Chinese” products, which can also be dangerous to their health. It is worthwhile to cultivate authentic, traditional, intangible cultural heritage, because they are not only knowledge of previous generations, but thanks to them various economic activities can be developed, they improve the quality of life of residents and visitors and more broadly affect the development and diversification of regions, they also protect the natural environment to some extent.

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