



Beyond Service: The Impact of Cloud Technologies on Customer Satisfaction in Sri Lankan SME Hotels – A Review

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Abstract

This review examines how cloud technologies shape customer satisfaction in Sri Lankan SME hotels. Methodology: A systematic literature review was conducted using a PRISMA-aligned approach across major academic sources, with thematic synthesis used to analyse the retained studies. Findings: The reviewed literature shows that cloud technologies most consistently influence customer satisfaction through improved responsiveness, convenience, personalisation, communication, and service consistency, although these outcomes depend on organisational readiness, staff capability, and contextual fit. Implications: The review suggests that Sri Lankan SME hotels should adopt context-appropriate cloud technologies that improve actual service delivery rather than pursue digital sophistication for its own sake. Originality: The study consolidates fragmented hospitality technology literature into a context-sensitive synthesis focused specifically on customer satisfaction in Sri Lankan SME hotels.

Keywords: Cloud Technology, Customer Satisfaction, SME Hotels, Sri Lanka, Hospitality Digitalisation, Service Quality, Systematic Literature Review

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INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry has experienced a major technological transformation over the past decade, with digital systems becoming increasingly central to hotel operations, customer interaction, service coordination, and experience delivery. In hotel environments, technologies such as property management systems, customer relationship management platforms, mobile applications, cloud-based booking systems, chatbots, and smart service tools are no longer viewed merely as administrative aids. Instead, they are increasingly positioned as strategic resources that can influence service quality, operational efficiency, and customer experience (Bilgihan et al., 2015; Law et al., 2020; Shin et al., 2022).

This transformation is especially important because customer satisfaction remains one of the most critical indicators of hotel performance. In the hospitality context, customer satisfaction is shaped not only by the tangible quality of rooms and facilities but also by service responsiveness, communication quality, reliability, personal attention, and the overall convenience of the guest journey. Service quality literature has consistently shown that customer satisfaction is closely related to dimensions such as responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and reliability, and that these dimensions influence repeat patronage, positive word of mouth, and loyalty outcomes (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Kasiri et al., 2017; Wu & Ko, 2013). As customer expectations become increasingly shaped by digital service norms, the role of technology in supporting or undermining these dimensions has become more significant.

Cloud-based technologies have gained particular importance in this environment because they offer scalable, accessible, and integrated solutions that may be more feasible for small- and medium-sized hotels than traditional on-premises systems. Such technologies enable hotels to manage reservations, customer data, front office operations, internal coordination, guest

communication, and service requests with greater flexibility and speed. Research suggests that these systems can improve both operational and customer-facing dimensions of service by enabling faster response, better information access, enhanced personalisation, and improved consistency across service encounters (Law et al., 2020; Shin & Kang, 2020). This issue is highly relevant to Sri Lanka, where the tourism and hospitality sector has long played an important role in national development, employment generation, and regional economic participation, while SME hotels remain especially important for local entrepreneurship and regional accommodation diversity (Kumara & Gunawardana, 2018; Samaraweera & Jayasiri, 2016).

Although technology in hospitality has attracted growing scholarly attention, the literature remains fragmented across technological categories, outcome variables, and research contexts. Some studies focus on operational digitalisation, others examine customer experience and service quality. In contrast, others investigate individual technologies such as mobile applications, AI, chatbots, CRM systems, or IoT-enabled smart hotel features. As a result, the literature contains many valuable insights. However, these are spread across different research streams rather than consolidated into a coherent understanding of how cloud technologies shape customer satisfaction in hotel environments (Law et al., 2020; Park & Jeong, 2019; Veloso & Gómez-Suárez, 2023). This fragmentation is particularly evident in relation to SME hotels and developing economy settings, and Sri Lankan evidence remains relatively limited and scattered (Kumara & Gunawardana, 2018; Kumarapeli et al., 2016; Samaraweera & Jayasiri, 2016).

In response to this gap, the review addresses the following question: How do cloud technologies shape customer satisfaction in Sri Lankan SME hotels? To answer this question, the study identifies the major cloud-based technologies discussed in the hospitality literature, synthesises the main mechanisms through which these technologies influence satisfaction, examines

the barriers and contextual conditions affecting their effectiveness, and interprets the evidence through relevant theoretical lenses. The review contributes conceptually by integrating fragmented hospitality technology and customer satisfaction literature, contextually by foregrounding Sri Lankan SME hotels, and practically by clarifying that cloud technologies should be understood as service enablers whose value depends on how effectively they improve actual guest experience.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Review design

This study was designed as a structured literature review and reported in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines to improve transparency, reproducibility, and methodological rigour in the identification, selection, appraisal, and synthesis of evidence (Page et al., 2021). Although the review remains qualitative and interpretive in orientation, this method follows a systematic protocol rather than a purely narrative approach.

Review the scope and question.

The review question guiding the study is: how do cloud-based technologies influence customer satisfaction in Sri Lankan SME hotels? The Population, Concept, and Context logic informed the scope of the review. The population comprised SME hotels and hospitality businesses; the concept focused on cloud- and digitally enabled technologies that shape the guest experience; and the context centred on Sri Lanka, while also drawing on international hospitality evidence where local studies were limited.

Information sources and search strategy

A structured search strategy was developed in accordance with PRISMA 2020 and PRISMA S reporting principles (Page et al., 2021; Rethlefsen et al., 2021). Searches were conducted across ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, Scispace, Google Scholar, and supplementary reference tracking of relevant articles. The review covered studies published between

2010 and 2025 because this period captures the acceleration of cloud adoption, mobile hospitality systems, AI-enabled services, and smart hotel technologies. Search terms were combined using Boolean operators and included phrases such as “cloud computing”, “cloud based technology”, “property management system”, “customer relationship management”, “AI”, “IoT”, “mobile applications”, “customer satisfaction”, “guest experience”, “hospitality”, “hotel”, “SME hotel”, “small hotel”, and “Sri Lanka”.

Table 1: Information sources

Element	Description	Examples used in this review
Databases	Primary academic sources searched	ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, Scispace.com, Google Scholar
Period	Publication window used for study retrieval	2010 to 2025
Core concepts	Technology and outcome terms combined with Boolean operators	Cloud computing, PMS, AI, IoT, mobile applications, customer satisfaction, and guest experience
Context terms	Hospitality and setting terms	Hotel, hospitality, SME hotel, small hotel, Sri Lanka

Source: Author’s own

Eligibility criteria

Inclusion criteria were defined before screening. Studies were included when they were peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers with substantive empirical or conceptual relevance, or authoritative industry and policy reports, published between 2010 and 2025, written in English and focused on hotels, hospitality, tourism accommodation, or closely related service settings and explicitly addressed digital technology adoption, service quality, guest experience, or customer satisfaction. Studies were excluded when

they were duplicates, lacked a clear hospitality connection, focused only on large-scale enterprise contexts without transferable insights for SMEs, were opinion pieces without analytical value, or did not address customer-related outcomes.

Study selection process

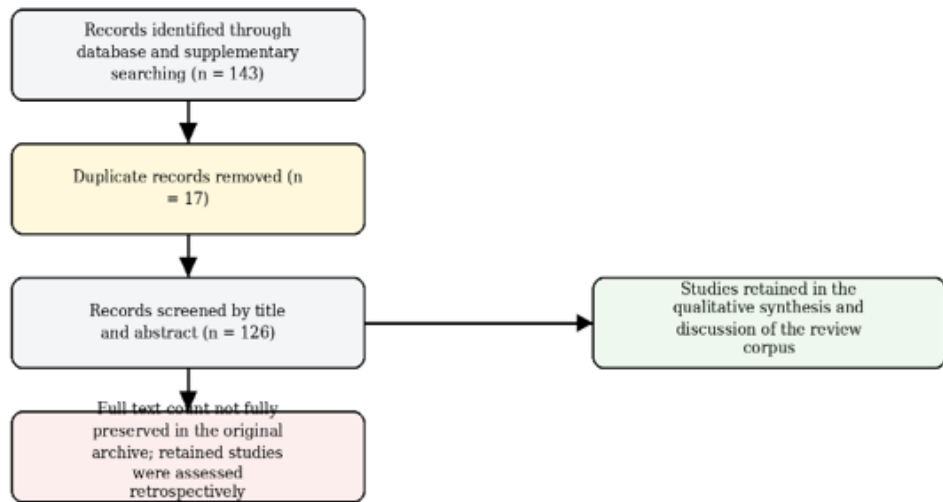
Study selection followed a staged screening process. Titles and abstracts were first reviewed for relevance, after which the remaining records were assessed at the full-text level against the eligibility criteria. Where Sri Lanka-specific evidence was scarce, international studies were retained when they offered strong conceptual, empirical, or operational relevance for SME hospitality settings. The final evidence base, therefore, included both local and international studies, but the synthesis prioritised findings relevant to the Sri Lankan SME hotel context. This staged procedure reflects the study identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion logic required by PRISMA 2020.

Data extraction, quality appraisal, and synthesis

Data were extracted from each included source using a structured matrix covering author, year, country or context, study design, technology focus, theoretical lens, main findings, and implications for customer satisfaction. To improve methodological quality, the selected sources were also appraised for relevance, clarity of method, contextual fit, and analytical contribution. The synthesis was then completed through a three-stage thematic analysis: descriptive coding of technologies and customer outcomes, theoretical mapping against SERVQUAL, RBV, and ECT, and contextual interpretation for Sri Lankan SME hotels. This process enabled the review to move beyond description and to generate a conceptually grounded account of how cloud technologies shape responsiveness, reliability, assurance, personalisation, and the confirmation of expectations.

Methodological limitations

The review is limited by its reliance on secondary sources and by the uneven availability of Sri Lanka-specific empirical studies. In addition, because digital transformation in hospitality continues to evolve quickly, some findings may reflect a rapidly changing technological environment. Nevertheless, the PRISMA-aligned design, explicit eligibility criteria, transparent search logic, and structured synthesis procedures substantially strengthen the review's credibility and provide a more robust platform for future empirical research.



Note. The original review was developed over time. Accordingly, the identification and duplicate counts were retrospectively recoverable, while the exact full text count could not be reconstructed with complete precision.

Figure 1: PRISMA-based study selection framework for the reviewed literature.

Source: Researchers' own

Retrospective evidence-based profile

The original review was conducted over an extended period, and the complete PRISMA screening log was not preserved. However, a retrospective reconstruction was possible for the identification stage. A total of 143 records

were initially identified across the database and supplementary source searching, of which approximately 17 were recognised as duplicates, leaving 126 unique records for screening. The paper contains 89 references in total, including 87 substantive sources used in the review corpus and 2 methodological sources added during revision to support PRISMA 2020 reporting. Of the total reference list, 73 references (82.0%) are journal articles, 6 (6.7%) are government or policy reports, 5 (5.6%) are web or document sources, 4 (4.5%) are other scholarly or professional sources, and 1 (1.1%) is a thesis or dissertation. In temporal terms, 53 sources (59.6%) were published from 2020 onwards. This evidence profile demonstrates that the review is weighted towards recent scholarly literature while retaining foundational theoretical and contextual sources required for interpretive synthesis.

Table 2: Evidence Search

Evidence category	Count	Percentage
Journal articles	73	82.0%
Government or policy reports	6	6.7%
Web or document sources	5	5.6%
Other scholarly or professional sources	4	4.5%
Thesis or dissertation	1	1.1%
Published 2020 onwards	53	59.6%

Source: Authors' own

FINDINGS

Overview of the reviewed evidence

The reviewed literature indicates a broadly positive yet conditional relationship between cloud technologies and customer satisfaction in the hospitality sector. Across the selected studies, technologies such as property management systems, customer relationship management platforms, mobile

applications, chatbots, artificial intelligence tools, and Internet of Things-based smart hotel solutions are frequently associated with improved responsiveness, service accessibility, convenience, personalisation, and service consistency. However, the literature does not suggest that these outcomes occur automatically. Rather, customer satisfaction appears to increase when technology is effectively integrated into service processes and supported by organisational capability, staff readiness, and customer-centred implementation (Bilgihan et al., 2015; Law et al., 2020; Shin et al., 2022).

A strong pattern across the reviewed studies is that the literature is richer in discussing the potential of hospitality technologies than in demonstrating how those technologies consistently produce satisfaction across different hotel contexts. Many studies highlight innovation, digital transformation, and smart service development, but fewer studies systematically explain the conditions under which customer satisfaction improves in SME settings. This is especially relevant in Sri Lankan and comparable developing-economy contexts, where financial constraints, infrastructure limitations, and capability gaps may prevent hotels from translating digital adoption into service-quality improvements (Kumara & Gunawardana, 2018; Samaraweera & Jayasiri, 2016).

Cloud technologies identified in the reviewed studies

The reviewed literature indicates that cloud technologies in hospitality are not discussed as a single uniform category. Instead, they appear as a cluster of interrelated systems that affect different parts of the hotel service journey. The most prominent technologies in the reviewed studies are property management systems, customer relationship management systems, mobile applications, AI-based tools, chatbots, and IoT-enabled smart hotel technologies. Although these technologies vary in technical complexity and customer visibility, they share a common strategic purpose in the literature: to improve the hotel's ability to deliver more efficient, reliable, and customer-centred service (Law et al., 2020; Shin et al., 2022).

Customer relationship management systems are more directly associated with customer satisfaction because they support guest profiling, communication, personalisation, service recovery, and long-term relationship management. The literature suggests that CRM can enhance satisfaction where hotels use customer information meaningfully to tailor interactions and improve service relevance (Kumarapeli et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2021). Mobile applications are associated with booking convenience, service access, customer control, information availability, and communication speed, but their value depends on usability and integration quality (Lei et al., 2019; Ozturk et al., 2016; Park et al., 2025). AI tools and chatbots are linked to response speed and service accessibility, while IoT systems are associated with smart room functions and digitally enhanced convenience (Phu, 2024; Shin & Kang, 2020; Talukder et al., 2024; Vashishth et al., 2024; Youssofi et al., 2023).

Mechanisms through which cloud technologies influence customer satisfaction

Across the reviewed studies, four mechanisms consistently explain how cloud technologies influence customer satisfaction: responsiveness, convenience, personalisation, and service consistency.

Responsiveness is one of the strongest mechanisms because cloud technologies help hotels respond more quickly to customer requests, booking issues, service needs, and complaints. Convenience is another major mechanism because mobile applications, booking interfaces, and digital service channels reduce customer effort and improve accessibility. Personalisation is strengthened when technologies help hotels recognise customer preferences and adapt communication and service accordingly. Service consistency is improved through better information coordination, fewer operational errors, and more reliable service delivery (Kasiri et al., 2017; Oliver, 1980; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Wu & Ko, 2013).

Taken together, these findings show that both visible digital interactions and invisible operational improvements shape customer satisfaction. This is especially important for SME hotels because it means that the most meaningful gains in customer satisfaction may come not from the most advanced technologies, but from those that improve basic service reliability, communication quality, and customer convenience.

Barriers, tensions, and contextual constraints

Although the literature broadly supports the positive role of cloud technologies in improving customer satisfaction, it also reveals important barriers and tensions. One of the most consistently discussed constraints is cost. SME hotels often face limited financial capacity to invest in multiple digital systems, recurring cloud subscriptions, staff training, and infrastructure upgrades. A second barrier is limited digital capability. Customer satisfaction benefits do not emerge simply from purchasing technology; staff must be able to use the systems properly, management must support process integration, and data must be maintained accurately (Kumara & Gunawardana, 2018; Samaraweera & Jayasiri, 2016).

A third tension concerns the relationship between high tech and high touch. Hospitality remains a service industry in which customers value empathy, warmth, attentiveness, and trust. The reviewed evidence therefore suggests that technology works best when it supports human hospitality rather than displacing it entirely (Youssofi et al., 2023).

Sri Lankan relevance and emerging synthesis

When the reviewed studies are interpreted through the Sri Lankan SME hotel context, an important synthesis emerges. The literature does not suggest that customer satisfaction improves because hotels adopt the most advanced or visible digital technologies. Rather, it suggests that customer satisfaction improves when hotels adopt context-appropriate cloud technologies that strengthen the actual service experience in practical, manageable, and

sustainable ways.

The emerging perspective from the reviewed literature is that cloud technologies shape customer satisfaction in Sri Lankan SME hotels through a conditional and context-sensitive pathway. Their impact depends on the alignment between technology, service delivery, guest expectations, and internal capability. This view moves beyond simple technological optimism and offers a more grounded understanding of digital transformation in hospitality.

DISCUSSION

Integrated interpretation of the reviewed evidence

The findings of this review indicate that cloud technologies shape customer satisfaction in Sri Lankan SME hotels through a combination of operational, relational, and experiential mechanisms rather than through a simple linear effect. Technologies such as PMS, CRM, mobile applications, chatbots, AI-based tools, and IoT solutions were most consistently associated with customer satisfaction when they improved responsiveness, convenience, personalisation, and service consistency. However, these outcomes do not arise from technology adoption alone. Instead, they depend on implementation quality, service integration, staff capability, and contextual suitability (Bilgihan et al., 2015; Law et al., 2020; Shin et al., 2022).

This is a critical point because much of the hospitality technology literature tends to frame digital transformation as inherently positive. The reviewed evidence does not fully support such a deterministic view. Rather, the literature suggests that cloud technologies become meaningful for customer satisfaction only when they strengthen actual service performance (Kasiri et al., 2017; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Wu & Ko, 2013).

Theoretical interpretation of the findings

SERVQUAL helps explain why cloud technologies matter for customer satisfaction: technologies improve satisfaction most when they strengthen

responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and convenience. Expectation Confirmation Theory explains why similar technologies may produce different outcomes across contexts; satisfaction rises when technologies deliver the convenience and service quality customers expect, but falls when actual service falls short (Oliver, 1980). The Resource-Based View is particularly useful in the SME hotel context because cloud technologies become strategically valuable only when combined with organisational capability, trained staff, and managerial commitment (Barney, 1991). Stakeholder Theory broadens the analysis by showing that customer satisfaction outcomes are shaped not just by the technology and the guest, but also by owners, managers, staff, vendors, and institutional support systems (Freeman, 1984).

Novel insights for Sri Lankan SME hotels

One of the key contributions of this review is the argument that customer satisfaction in Sri Lankan SME hotels is most likely to improve through context-appropriate cloud adoption, not through technological sophistication alone. The reviewed studies suggest that the most meaningful gains may come from technologies that improve core service functions such as booking accuracy, communication quality, service responsiveness, customer record management, and operational consistency.

Another novel insight is that cloud technologies should be understood as part of a service capability system rather than as standalone technological investments. The value of technology appears to depend on the interaction between systems, staff, service design, customer expectations, and organisational readiness. This perspective helps explain why the same technology may produce stronger outcomes in some hotels than in others.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY, PRACTICE, AND POLICY

This review contributes theoretically by integrating research on hospitality technology with theories of service quality and customer

satisfaction. It suggests that cloud technologies should not be theorised only as innovation artefacts but as service mediators that influence customer satisfaction through multiple mechanisms, including convenience, responsiveness, personalisation, and consistency.

For hotel managers, the review suggests that cloud technologies should be evaluated based on their ability to improve specific customer satisfaction mechanisms rather than on their novelty alone. For policymakers and tourism support institutions, the findings imply that digital transformation in SME hospitality should be supported through training, infrastructure support, and implementation guidance, rather than technology promotion alone.

LIMITATIONS, RESEARCH GAPS AND FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

Limitations

This review has several limitations. First, although the study was revised and strengthened in accordance with systematic literature review principles, the review process was partly reconstructed from previously compiled materials. As a result, the search and screening stages could be reported more clearly than in the original article, but not every intermediate stage could be documented with the same level of prospective precision as in a fully protocol-driven review (Page et al., 2021; Rethlefsen et al., 2021).

Second, the reviewed literature is heterogeneous in terms of technologies, methods, and customer-related outcomes. Third, although this review focuses on Sri Lankan SME hotels, the literature on Sri Lanka remains comparatively limited. Therefore, part of the analysis depends on drawing transferable insights from international hospitality studies and interpreting them in relation to SME hotel realities in Sri Lanka (Kumara & Gunawardana, 2018; Samaraweera & Jayasiri, 2016).

Identified Research Gaps and Future Research Agenda

Several research gaps are evident from the reviewed literature. First, there is a clear contextual gap. A substantial proportion of hospitality technology studies are based on larger hotels, international chains, or technologically mature markets, whereas Sri Lankan SME hotel settings remain underexplored. This limits understanding of how resource constraints, infrastructure conditions, and managerial capability shape customer satisfaction outcomes in local hotel environments. Second, there is a conceptual gap. Many studies discuss digital transformation, smart hospitality, or service innovation in broad terms without isolating how specific cloud technologies, such as PMS, CRM, mobile applications, chatbots, AI-based tools, and IoT systems, influence customer satisfaction through different mechanisms. Third, there is a methodological gap. Existing studies often rely on cross-sectional evidence or single-technology perspectives, leaving insufficient insight into causal pathways, longitudinal change, and interaction effects among technologies, service processes, and customer expectations. Fourth, there is a theoretical gap. Although service quality, expectation confirmation, resource capability, and stakeholder perspectives are all relevant, few studies integrate these lenses into a single framework tailored to SME hospitality settings.

These identified gaps form a strong research agenda for the future. The priority is for more empirical research focused specifically on Sri Lankan SME hotels. Future studies should examine how cloud technologies are actually selected, adopted, and used across different hotel categories, regions, and market segments. Multi-case studies, mixed-methods designs, and survey-based investigations would be especially valuable because they could capture both managerial and guest perspectives on technology-enabled customer satisfaction.

The second priority is technology-specific research. Future scholars should distinguish more clearly between the customer-satisfaction implications of

PMS, CRM, mobile applications, AI tools, chatbots, and IoT-based systems rather than treating digital transformation as a single undifferentiated construct. Such work would clarify which technologies are most effective for improving responsiveness, convenience, personalisation, trust, and service consistency in SME hotel contexts.

The third priority is for process-based and mechanism-based research. The present review suggests that organisational readiness, staff capability, integration quality, customer digital familiarity, and service design are likely to influence whether cloud technologies improve customer satisfaction. Future research should explicitly test these mediating and moderating relationships, rather than assuming that technology directly produces customer value.

The fourth priority is for theory development. Future studies should develop and test more context-sensitive conceptual models of customer satisfaction enabled by cloud technology in the hospitality sector. In particular, a stronger integration of SERVQUAL, Expectation Confirmation Theory, the Resource-Based View, and Stakeholder Theory could yield a more robust explanatory framework for SME hotel settings in developing economies.

The fifth priority is for comparative and longitudinal research. Comparative studies could explore whether the satisfaction effects of cloud technologies differ between Sri Lankan SME hotels and similar hotels in other South Asian or developing economy settings. Longitudinal research could examine how customer satisfaction changes over time as hotels move from basic digital adoption to deeper service integration. This would help determine whether satisfaction gains are immediate, temporary, or cumulative.

Finally, future research should examine the balance between high tech and high touch in greater depth. The reviewed evidence suggests that cloud technologies can improve convenience and efficiency, but hospitality customers still value empathy, reassurance, and human interaction. More research is needed on how SME hotels can combine digital efficiency with

interpersonal warmth to sustain both customer satisfaction and service authenticity.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review examined how cloud technologies shape customer satisfaction in Sri Lankan SME hotels by synthesising evidence from hospitality technology, service quality, customer experience, and SME adoption literature. The review shows that cloud technologies most consistently influence customer satisfaction through improved responsiveness, convenience, personalisation, communication quality, and service consistency. Technologies such as property management systems, customer relationship management systems, mobile applications, AI-enabled tools, chatbots, and IoT-based solutions all appear in the literature as mechanisms that can support customer value. However, their effects are not automatic and should not be treated as universally positive.

A central conclusion of this review is that cloud technologies improve customer satisfaction only when they are effectively integrated into service delivery and aligned with organisational capability and customer expectations. In this sense, customer satisfaction arises when technologies improve how service is delivered, experienced, and evaluated. Overall, this study concludes that cloud technologies can become important enablers of customer satisfaction and competitive service improvement in Sri Lankan SME hotels. However, only when they are selected, implemented, and used in ways that are context-appropriate, customer-centred, and organisationally supported.

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