

A Survey on Awareness and Perception of Millennial towards CSR Activities Conducted by FMCG Companies in Pune

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Abstract

In the last few years, relationship between companies and society has gone into transformation and business organizations have started realizing that their involvement in corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities can influence the consumers' buying behaviour. Many researches have been done on CSR as a subject in developed countries but not much has been done in developing countries like India. This paper aims to examine the awareness, perception and support of Millennial towards CSR initiatives of FMCG companies. The study evaluate the importance placed by Millennial on Carroll's factors of CSR incorporating economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities, where, although economic responsibility tops the priority list. According to the findings, Millennial differ in their perception of CSR according to gender. The findings of this research help FMCG companies to know about the CSR issues they should focus and help the firms to embody CSR into strategic moves.

Keywords: CSR, Awareness, Knowledge, Perception, Millennial

Introduction

Maximizing profit was the primary aim of the traditional business but the role of businesses in society is no longer focused on creating wealth alone but is also focused on acting responsibly towards stakeholders (Harrison & Freeman, 1999). In today's prevailing business environment, corporations include stakeholders as one of the components of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in which consumers are considered as the most important and because of the influence of better education and the media support, these consumers are more aware of the corporations' actions and activities they are involved in. In the current dynamic environment, CSR has become an essential pillar for the existence of the organizations because of this fact modern businesses have started incorporating it in its strategic move. The purpose of the research is to understand the concept of CSR in the context of emerging economy like India. This research tries to discover the perception of Indian Millennial in context with CSR activities of FMCG companies in India before getting associated with their products and services. Apart from that, this paper aims to examine the awareness, knowledge and support of Indian Millennial towards CSR initiatives of FMCG companies. It also examines the change in the perception of Indian Millennial towards FMCG companies' CSR initiatives w.r.t. change in gender. Furthermore, this study also tries to identify which type of CSR component is the most important to Indian Millennial. The definition of CSR for this paper is based on the Carroll's pyramid of CSR.

Literature Review

Corporate Social Responsibility – An Introduction

In the late 1960's, the term stakeholder was introduced by multinational corporations which included all those who were directly or indirectly affected by the corporations' activities. According to McAlister, Ferrell, O. C and Ferrell, L. (2003), the economy is influenced by the ways in which the corporation relates to its stakeholders. Soon thereafter, the term "corporate social responsibility" became pervasive in business environment. According to Freeman et al.

(2010), the goal of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is to take accountability of all the company's actions and to have a positive impact on its environment and stakeholders.

Defining the CSR

According to Carroll (1979) companies are expected (1) to fulfil business' fundamental responsibility i.e. economic responsibilities of maximizing the economic returns while satisfying the needs of customers by providing desired goods and services, (2) to fulfil their legal responsibilities by complying with laws and regulations , (3) to fulfil their ethical responsibilities by doing the right thing in fair and just ways and (4) to address their philanthropic responsibilities by voluntarily contributing to and developing the society in which they operate.

Main Perspectives and Theories within CSR Field

There are three main perspectives on the responsibilities of companies in the literature.

The classical, or shareholder perspective- It proposes that fundamental responsibility of business is to maximize the returns for owners and shareholders of the company. This approach is supported by Friedman (1970). According to Nielsen & Thomsen (2007), in this approach, not business organizations but government is considered to be responsible for social issues, and companies address CSR only if the implementation creates long-time value for the owners.

The stakeholder perspective – It addresses the responsibility of companies towards the owners as well as various stakeholders of the company. Freeman et al (2010) define stakeholders as 'those groups without whose support, the business would cease to be viable' (p. 26) – employees, customers, investors, public authorities, suppliers, communities, etc. The main idea of this approach is that stakeholders have the right to know what contributions corporate entities are making to society (Idowu & Towler, 2004). 'Stakeholder management' is considered to be the main driver of CSR activity and reporting (Gray, Owen & Adams, 1996).

The societal perspective- It addresses the responsibility of companies towards the society as a whole. Companies are viewed as an integral part of the society and they need to have a public consent for their operations, so called 'license to operate'. Socially responsible companies are considered to be 'good corporate citizens'.

Awareness and Perception of Consumers

Recently, people have started judging corporations not only on their economic success but also on non-economic criteria (Carroll, 1979). First time this change was being mentioned by Howard Bowen in his book Social Responsibilities of the Businessman. Society is more affluent and because of increasing level of awareness, consumer is getting more attentive towards corporate actions, which eventually influence their buying decision behaviour. Customers expect companies to show socially responsible behaviour in a broad way. New development in the customer are characterized them as 'sophisticated' and 'environmentally and socially conscious'.

Lack of consumer awareness of company's CSR practices does not allow company to enjoy any benefits. Only if companies inform consumers properly about their CSR initiatives then only they will receive the benefits of their investments in CSR (van de Ven, 2008). Information about CSR activities of companies is applied to compensate the companies which are socially responsible by purchasing their products and punishes the irresponsible companies by avoiding any purchase of their products. Therefore companies must show some concern for increasing the awareness levels about their CSR engagement.

The FMCG Industry

The fourth largest sector in the economy is the Indian FMCG sector and its market is expected to grow to US\$ 33.4 billion by 2015. One of the major reasons behind active engagement of FMCG companies in CSR activities is the day to day increasing intellect of Indian consumers in making a purchase decision. Indian corporate have responded proactively to the increasing awareness towards CSR among Indian consumers and increasing societal expectations. CSR is considered as an important branding tool for the companies, especially for FMCGs. This proactive response of the FMCG companies can be seen prominently in Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) report on CSR, out of 175 Indian companies studied, 52 companies belongs to the FMCG sector which have taken the maximum of CSR initiatives.

This large market is under the scanner of consumers, the most important stakeholder, who are not ready to ignore the actions of these companies due to which there is an increasing pressure on FMCG companies to adapt this new market scenario and to fulfil their responsibility towards the environment and the society at large. Today, even in India, FMCG companies are proactively integrating CSR in their core business activity and maintaining transparency through the disclosure of responsible business practices.

Indian FMCG companies represent both, domestic as well multinational companies. The problems and issues prevailing in Indian society today are too complex to be solved by government and NGOs alone. Therefore, corporate is expected to achieve economic goals along with rendering their social responsibilities and providing meaningful solutions to those problems.

CSR in India

The ethical consumerism is not only confined to developed countries but is gradually growing and gaining importance in developing countries like China, India and others in Asia which are going through an economic transition. Rise in social consciousness of consumers in these emerging economies has significant impact on the process of delivering the products by the corporate to consumers in these markets (Auger et al., 2010). Although this transformation of consumers of developing countries towards companies engaged in CSR is not an easy task because of cultural difference, low incomes and relatively poor levels of consumer education.

In India, there is an ocean of scope for corporate in field of CSR because of diversity in culture, income and living standards as well as social status. Even government can play a huge role through developing the infrastructure facilities and building the good governance. But now it's an increasing realisation from corporate about the efficacy of CSR over their economic gain and these corporate bodies in India no more follows the traditional way of conducting CSR by merely charity and donations but has started integrating CSR with corporate strategy and incorporate CSR in their annual reports too. Companies have started framing specific policies and goals for their CSR programs. CSR activities of companies in India have become more organised and they have started assigning budgets to support them. With the growing business and competitive scenario, corporate in India have started realizing the importance of the concept of CSR in building trust and sustainable relation with customers, employees, communities, stakeholders and environment and as a result, companies now have started behaving ethically and responsibly towards community at large. Corporate are even associating themselves with Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for executing CSR activities more effectively as NGOs are well versed with the social problems of local communities and are experts in tackling them. Government of India has made mandatory for the corporate to give something back to the society which has helped them in achieving their economic goals and

strengthen their relation with stakeholders by asking them to spend, on an average, 2% of their net profit on community development.

Millennial Generation

Many researchers have named Millennials as generation Y, Net (or Internet) generation, Nexters, and Nintendo generation. According to various researchers' views, Millennials are one of the reasons behind increasing attention of companies towards CSR. Howe and Strauss (2000) define generation as:

“A society-wide peer group, born over a period roughly the same length as the passage from youth to adulthood, who collectively possess a common persona, i. e attitudes about family life, gender roles, institutions, politics, religion, culture, lifestyle, and the future (p. 40)”.

Research Methodology

Sample and Research Method

The FMCG sector was being considered for this research and top five FMCG companies which are highly socially sensitive and active were selected. For the purpose of this research, report of “Partner in Change” which is non-government and non-profit organisation working for awareness of corporate social responsibility, is being considered as the basis of choosing top five FMCG companies. This report of “Partner in Change” was published after the analysis of CSR spending estimates and Business Responsibility Reports of the Top 100 listed companies in India based on Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) rankings on 31st March 2011. Following are the five FMCG companies, which were selected on the basis of how much they spent on CSR in FY 12-13:

- (i) Nestle India
- (ii) Hindustan Unilever
- (iii) Colgate-Palmolive (India)
- (iv) ITC
- (v) Godrej Consumer Products

In order to achieve the objectives of the research, a personal survey of Millennials was conducted. In this research, the population we studied were those who did masters in management, doing private jobs in Pune and the management students who are still studying in Pune. However, due to time and cost constraints we used a convenient sample method. Facebook was also used to approach students and alumni. In addition, references were used as a means of reaching more college students across the city. The sample was representative and conveniently drawn from Millennials population of Pune.

But considering the recommendation of Roscoe (1975), sample sizes between 30 and 500 are appropriate for most studies, a total of 202 Millennials were chosen as respondents. The survey questionnaires were conveniently distributed to Millennials of city Pune. The data was collected during the period 15th January to 10th March 2014, through personal administered questionnaires. A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 230 were received. 12 of the completed questionnaires were incomplete, leaving a total of 218 replies. 218 valid responses were received for further analysis. Confidence level was 95%.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the sample

Demographic Factors	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	101	50.0
Female	101	50.0
Age		
18 to 25	152	75.2
26 to 35	50	24.8
Marital Status		
Single	172	85.1
Married	30	14.9
Salary Monthly		
Below 20000	140	69.3
20001 to 40000	39	19.3
Above 40000	23	11.4
Occupation		
Student	109	54.0
Private Sector	93	46.0

Questionnaire Development

A questionnaire survey was carried out to collect the responses of these Millennials in Pune. Maignan's (2001) and Ramasamy's & Yeung's (2009) survey were referred for the survey of this research. Therefore, the validity and reliability of the questions of the study is considered to be high since the questions had already been tested. Total number of questions in the questionnaire is 35. The questionnaire was divided into three major sections. Section A provided information on consumers' awareness and knowledge towards CSR activities conducted by FMCG companies. This section examined the level of understanding of Millennials of the term CSR, which helped in finding the Millennials who were able to complete the rest of the questionnaire. Information about the perception of Millennials and their willingness to support socially responsible FMCG companies was collected through the statements mentioned in section B. A five-point Likert scale ranging from "1" for "strongly disagree" to "5" for "strongly agree", enriched by the "Neutral" option, was used to measure the variables like perception and willingness to support socially responsible FMCG companies. Section C provided demographic information of the Indian Millennials such as gender, age, occupation, marital status and monthly income level. Nominal scales were used to design Section C.

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to check the reliability of the variables like total perception was 0.896, total awareness was 0.573 and total support 0.677. Even though the generally acceptable Cronbach's alpha lower limit is 0.70, the Cronbach alpha value of 0.60 is still deemed acceptable in exploratory research (Hair et al., 1998).

This study is the blend of empirical (it is based on primary data), deductive (tests research hypotheses) and quantitative (includes the analysis of quantitative data collected with the use of a structured questionnaire). SPSS software was used to analyse the data obtained. Analyse of the data for Sections A and C of the questionnaire was done using descriptive statistics, whereas T-test of independence was used to analyse the data in Section B.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework articulates the relationships between a company's CSR actions and consumers' awareness, knowledge, perception and support towards those actions. This study also examines the Carroll's CSR factor important to Millennials. This study focuses on examining the following relationships:

- i. Awareness level and knowledge of Millennials towards FMCG companies taking CSR initiatives and gender.
- ii. Perception of Millennials towards FMCG companies taking CSR initiatives and gender.
- iii. Support of Millennial to FMCG companies taking CSR initiatives and gender.

Objectives

- (i) To find the awareness level of Millennials about FMCG companies taking CSR initiatives.
- (ii) To find the level of knowledge of Millennials about FMCG companies taking CSR initiatives.
- (iii) To study the willingness of Millennials to support FMCG companies involved in CSR activities.
- (iv) To study awareness, perception and support of Millennials towards FMCG companies involved in CSR activities w.r.t. gender.

Following research questions are needed to be answered:

- i. How do Gen Y consumers define "corporate social responsibility"?
- ii. Is the FMCG companies' CSR involvement important to Millennials?
- iii. Are males more aware of FMCG Company practicing CSR than females?
- iv. Which of the Carroll's CSR factors is being conducted the most by FMCG Companies?
- v. Gen Y is more familiar for which FMCG companies practicing CSR?
- vi. Which FMCG company does fulfil the social responsibilities the most according to Millennials?
- vii. How does perception towards FMCG companies practicing CSR change with the change in Gender?
- viii. Do females support CSR practices conducted by FMCG companies more than males?
- ix. Are Millennial willing to pay the price for a company that serves society with its CSR?

Hypotheses development

On the basis of literature review and Carroll's (1979) model, following research hypotheses are being developed for the study:

H1: Millennials are well aware of the term "CSR".

H2: There is no difference between the awareness of Male and female Millennials towards the CSR activities conducted by FMCG companies.

H3: Perception of Male and female Millennials towards the CSR activities conducted by FMCG companies is same.

H4: Indian Millennials considers philanthropic responsibility to be the most important CSR factor and expect that the FMCG Companies should involve in philanthropic responsibility the most.

H5: There is no difference between the support of Male and female Millennials towards the CSR activities conducted by FMCG companies.

H6: Millennials would pay more to buy products from a socially responsible company.

H7: Millennials are willing to support CSR only if the product quality and price is similar.

Data Analysis

Method of Data Analysis

The data analysis method begins with the profiling of respondents which includes demographics, response rate and missing data. Quantitative method was used in this research to reach a conclusion regarding the collected data. Descriptive method helped in describing and organizing the empirical data. Subsequently inferential statistics was conducted to analyse the relationship between the different variables. Furthermore, a series of Independent t-tests were conducted to examine the difference between male and female on the different variables. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability of the questions. We measured consumers' evaluation of CSR with a total of sixteen attributes consisting of four groups of social responsibility (Carroll, 1979).

Results and Discussion

Millennials' General Awareness towards CSR

This section presents the results of the findings on the Millennials' general awareness towards CSR. The summary of the findings is shown in Table 2. Based on the 218 questionnaires returned, 92.6% of the Millennials were aware of the concept of CSR well and 7.4% of them indicated having no awareness of CSR. This finding indicates that the majority of the Millennials seem to be aware of CSR. Table 3 suggests that FMCG companies should conduct CSR activities and contribute positively in the society within which they operate. Because 7.4% of the Millennials indicated that they do not have any awareness of CSR, we decided to exclude these Millennials' opinion in the subsequent analysis.

Millennials are familiar with the CSR initiatives taken by HUL (Mean=2.51) the most, followed by ITC (Mean=2.69) and they are somewhat familiar with the efforts taken by other three FMCG companies i.e. Nestle India, Godrej Consumer Products and Colgate-Palmolive. Millennials are more satisfied from the CSR initiatives taken by HUL (Mean=2.10) and ITC (Mean=2.17) more than the remaining three.

As per the findings of Table 4, option "All of the above" has obtained the highest frequency (165 counts) which shows that most of the Millennials define CSR as a blend of all Carroll's factors, followed by Philanthropic responsibility (25 counts) and Ethical responsibility (12 counts). This indicates that Millennials felt that business organisations should perform responsibilities towards society first over their Economic responsibility.

Table 2: Aware of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibilities

Response	Frequency	Percent
1 Yes	202	92.6
2 No	16	7.4
Total	218	100

Table 3: FMCG companies should conduct CSR activities and contribute positively in the society

Response	Frequency	Percent
1 Yes	166	82.2
2 No	8	4.0
3 Can't say	28	13.9
Total	202	100.0

Table 4: Definition of CSR

Response	Frequency	Percent
Legal responsibility	00	00
Ethical responsibility	12	5.9
Economic responsibility	00	00
Philanthropic responsibility	25	12.4
All of the above	165	81.7
Total	202	100

Table 5: CSR activities that the FMCG Companies should be involved in

Response	Mean
Legal responsibility	4.25
Ethical responsibility	4.35
Economic responsibility	4.15
Philanthropic responsibility	4.22

As for the CSR activities that the organisation should be involved in, the majority of the Millennials indicated that it is vital for FMCG organisations to perform the Ethical responsibility. The results of Table 5 show that Ethical responsibility has the highest overall mean (4.35), followed by Legal responsibilities (4.25), Philanthropic responsibilities (4.22) and Economic responsibilities (4.15). These results don't support the hypothesis.

Although, it is apparent from the results that all the four CSR factors are almost equally important to the Millennials. Millennials feel that philanthropic responsibilities are more important than economic responsibilities because of the prevailing many social problems in India and the government's inability to solve them. Even they expect government to support FMCG companies in solving these issues. In addition to this, Millennials consider the legal and ethical responsibilities to be vital for the country and expect FMCG companies to take certain measures to improve the lack of trust in the current ethical and legal systems in India.

Table 6: Gender and Total Awareness Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Total Awareness	Equal variances assumed	.702	.403	-4.021	196	.000	-1.171	.291	-1.746	-.597
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.018	194.846	.000	-1.171	.292	-1.746	-.596

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean total awareness scores for males and females. In Independent Samples T-Test, the significance level of Levene's test is $p = .403$ which is larger than $.05$, we would use the information in the first line of the t-test table, which refers to Equal variances assumed. In the output above the Sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.000 . As this value is less than the required cut-off of $.05$, this can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference in the mean total awareness scores for males ($M=9.18$, $SD=2.087$) and females [$M=10.35$, $SD=2.012$; $t(196)=-4.021$, $p=.000$]. Eta squared provides an indication of the magnitude of the differences between males and females. The magnitude of the differences in the means was moderate (eta squared= $.076$).

**Table 7: Gender and Total Perception
Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Total Perception	Equal variances assumed	.042	.837	2.277	196	.024	2.707	1.189	.362	5.051
	Equal variances not assumed			2.276	194.984	.024	2.707	1.190	.361	5.053

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean total perception scores for males and females. The significance level of Levene's test is $p = .837$ which is larger than $.05$, we would refer "Equal variances assumed". In the output table the Sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.024 . As this value is less than $.05$, so we can infer that there is a statistically significant difference in the mean total perception scores for males ($M=33.11$, $SD=8.232$) and females [$M=30.40$, $SD=8.496$; $t(196) = 2.277$, $p=0.024$]. The magnitude of the differences in the means of males and females was small ($\eta^2 = .026$).

**Table 8: Gender and Total Support
Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Total Support	Equal variances assumed	.115	.735	-.349	196	.728	-.158	.453	-1.052	.735
	Equal variances not assumed			-.348	191.112	.728	-.158	.454	-1.054	.738

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean total support scores for males and females. The significance level of Levene’s test is $p = .735$ which is larger than .05, we would refer to Equal variances assumed. The Sig. (2-tailed) value is .728 which is greater than .05, this can be concluded that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean total support scores for males ($M=9.58$, $SD=2.994$) and females [$M=9.74$, $SD=3.377$; $t(196)=-.349$, $p=.728$].

The results suggest high support of CSR from Millennials. The results show that:

- (1) I would pay more to buy products from a socially responsible company, mean = 2.10;
- (2) I consider the ethical reputation of businesses when I shop, mean = 2.19;
- (3) I avoid buying products from companies that have engaged in immoral actions, mean = 2.19; and (4) I would pay more to buy the products of a company that shows caring for the well-being of our society, mean = 1.95.
- (5) If the price and quality of two products are the same, I would buy from the firm that has a socially responsible reputation (mean = 1.43); Question 5 has the highest overall means compared with other responses which supports for hypothesis 5.

We summarize our findings in Table 9.

Table 9: Summary of Study Findings

Hypothesis	Result	Interpretation
1	Accepted	Millennials are well aware of the term “CSR”.
2	Rejected	There is difference between the awareness of Male and female Millennials towards the CSR activities conducted by FMCG companies.
3	Rejected	There is difference between the perception of Male and female Millennials towards the CSR activities conducted by FMCG companies.
4	Rejected	The FMCG Companies should involve in Ethical responsibility the most.
5	Accepted	There is no difference between the support of Male and female Millennials towards the CSR activities conducted by FMCG companies.
6	Accepted	Millennials would pay more to buy products from a socially responsible company.
7	Accepted	Millennials support CSR only if the product quality and price is similar.

Practical Implications

These findings suggest that Millennials in Pune are aware of the “CSR” and willing to support CSR. Millennials are somewhat aware of the CSR activities conducted by FMCG companies and are little satisfied with their efforts. Most people of developing countries like India strive daily to afford many of the basic necessities, because of which they spend their money prudently to buy the most affordable products. They are price sensitive and hardly heed to company’s high or low involvement in CSR activities.

Consumers in developed countries perceive positive about the companies engaged in CSR activities and most of the consumers are willing to support such efforts but consumers of developing countries don't consider CSR as a factor in buying a product from a company conducting CSR activities. The results of this research, using Millennials in Pune, indicate that companies should enhance their efforts to communicate their CSR efforts to the Millennials and still keep a check on the applicability of the CSR as concept. So companies need to be very careful before applying the concept of CSR strategy.

FMCG companies should keep a good eye over the Millennials before framing CSR strategy and should try seeing everything through their lens. Millennials lack awareness, perception and right attitude towards FMCG companies engaged in CSR activities. Because of the decreasing product differentiation which is one of the outcomes of heightened competition, CSR initiatives provide opportunities to the FMCG companies to increase purchase and strengthen customer relationships in a very innovative and less-imitable way.

The research findings indicate that FMCG companies have an uphill task ahead of communicating their CSR efforts to the Millennials and consumers at large. The findings of this study are very important to FMCG industry as they will be investing large amounts of money on CSR after government declaration of making CSR mandatory for corporations.

The research findings will allow the FMCG corporations to understand the consumers' priority for the CSR activities that they should be engaging in. Due to the high Millennials' interest and supportive attitude, companies should draw their attention towards making the execution of CSR activities more organised and consumer oriented, to achieve desired consumers' response. Moreover, the research findings will also contribute to academicians especially in the field of CSR in context with India.

Limitation and Future Research

Limitation of this research would provide guidance for future research. First, this research focuses only upon the FMCG industry, so maybe the interest of consumers regarding CSR will vary in other industries.

Second, the sample of the research is Millennials who are pursuing or completed management course and this research used a student sample as the respondents along with those who are working in private companies. These Millennials only represents a subgroup in Pune but, there are various groups of consumers available in Pune.

Third, this research provides an insight of Millennials' awareness, perception and support but there might be other dimensions of consumer behaviour which can be studied along with CSR. Fourth, types of companies (i.e. locally owned or foreign investment) are not considered in the study which can entice researchers for further research because consumers' expectations and responses might vary these companies. Fifth, future research can explore the relationship of other demographic factors like different income groups, with companies' CSR efforts.

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