

The international competition situation of wushu application for Olympic Games in Porter's Five Forces Model

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Abstract

Background & Study Aim:

Wushu has applied for entry into the Olympic Games three times and all failed. On January 8, 2020, wushu entered into the Dakar Youth Olympic Games, which also provided an opportunity for wushu's application to enter the Olympic Games. The purpose of this study is knowledge about the interfering factors of wushu's application to enter the Olympic Games and clarify the international situation of wushu's application to enter the Olympic Games.

Material & Methods:

This research is based on five forces model's research paradigm, using the method of literature review, and analysing relevant research results and policy documents.

Results:

Among the chips of wushu's application to enter the Olympic Games, wushu already has the preconditions to enter the Olympic Games, and it can bring benefits to the Olympic Games in terms of culture and public attraction. Among the barriers of wushu's application for entry into the Olympic Games, the relevant policies and strategic guidelines of the International Olympic Committee have challenged wushu's entry into the Olympic Games. Among the threats of competitive events, the popularity of existing competitive events, the youth attraction of potential events, the promotion mode and channel, the social influence, and the locality of alternative events are all the influencing factors that threaten wushu's entry into the Olympic Games.

Conclusions:

The authors suggests that the future research on internationalization of wushu and applying for the Olympic Games should focus on how to improve wushu popularity, youth attraction and social influence.

Keywords:

barriers • brainstorming • competitive situation • competitive strategy • martial arts

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Bilibili – Bilibili is a video sharing website based in China centering on ACG, an abbreviation for anime, comic (manga) and games [23].

Martial arts – plural noun any of various systems of combat and self-defence, e.g. judo or karate, developed especially in Japan and Korea and now usually practised as a sport [24].

Sanda – also known as Chinese boxing or Chinese kickboxing, is the official Chinese kickboxing full-contact combat sport. Sanda is a fighting system which was originally developed by the Chinese military based upon the study and practices of traditional Chinese martial arts and modern combat fighting techniques; it combines boxing and full-contact kickboxing, which includes close range and rapid successive punches and kicks, with wrestling, takedowns, throws, sweeps, kick catches, and in some competitions, even elbow and knee strikes [25].

Pushing hands – is a two-person training routine practiced in internal Chinese martial arts.

INTRODUCTION

On January 8th, 2020, *wushu* officially became the competition event of Dakar Youth Olympic Games in 2022, which brought a new opportunity for *wushu* to apply for the Olympic Games, and made *wushu*'s application for the Olympic Games once again become a hot spot of general concern in academic circles. On October 25th, 2021, the State General Administration of Sport of China issued the *14th Five-Year Plan for Sports Development*, which stated unequivocally, "Strive to keep Wushu in the Youth Olympic Games and to enter the Olympic Games as soon as possible" [1]. It shows that *wushu*'s entry into the Olympic Games plays an important role in enhancing the international influence of China's sports, but the process of realizing this strategic goal must be full of difficulties and obstacles.

Porter's Five Forces Model was first put forward by Professor Michael Porter of Harvard Business School, which is a theoretical model applicable to the research of competitive strategy. It is comprehensive in analysing the competitive situation, and has certain advantages and uniqueness [2]. After Porter's Five Forces Model put forward it, it was first applied in the field of enterprises. With the rise of interdisciplinary research, this theoretical model has gradually been introduced into the fields of politics, education, sports, etc., but it has not yet appeared in the field of *wushu*. The contents of Porter's Five Forces Model include the bargaining power of suppliers, the bargaining power of

buyers, the threat of potential competitors, the threat of existing competitors and the threat of alternative products (Figure 1).

Therefore, this study relies on Porter's Five Forces Model, using brainstorming, retaining the five forces model structure, comparing the Olympic Games to the market, *wushu* to the product, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to the buyer, the International Wushu Federation (IWUF) to the supplier, and the sports of competing with *wushu* to enter the Olympic Games to the competitive products. Among them, competitive projects include existing competitive projects, potential competitive projects and alternative projects. Then, the Five-Force Model of *wushu* applying for Olympic Games is obtained (Figure 2). The Five-Forces Model of *wushu* applying for Olympic Games includes the bargaining power of the IWUF (the bargaining chip of *wushu* applying for Olympic Games), the bargaining power of the IOC (the barrier of *wushu* applying for Olympic Games), the threat of existing competitive events, the threat of potential competitive events and the threat of alternative events. Theoretically speaking, Porter's Five Forces Model is suitable for analysing the international competitive situation of *wushu* to entering the Olympic Games. In view of this, this study analyses the international competition situation of *wushu* applying for Olympic Games from the perspective of Porter's Five Forces Model's research, which can achieve the effect of 'knowing ourselves and knowing each other, winning every battle' and provide theoretical basis for interdisciplinary research.

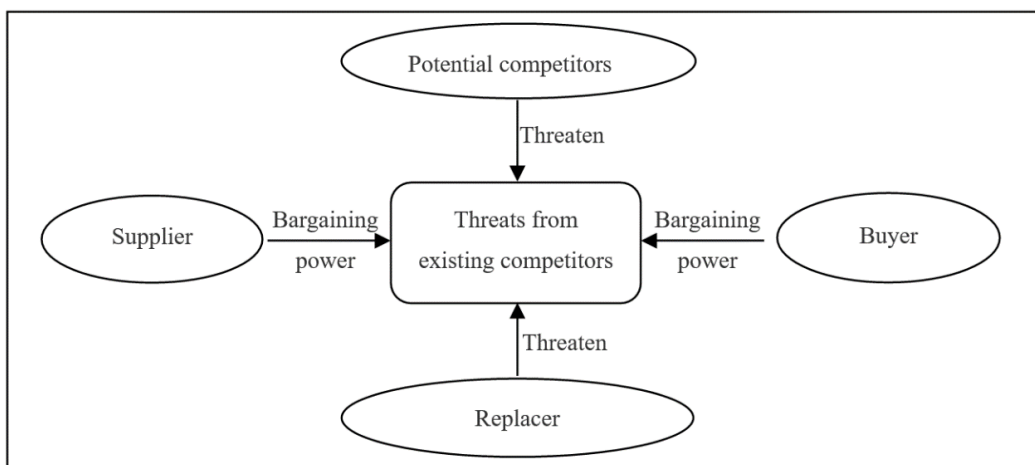


Figure 1. Porter's Five Forces Model [2].

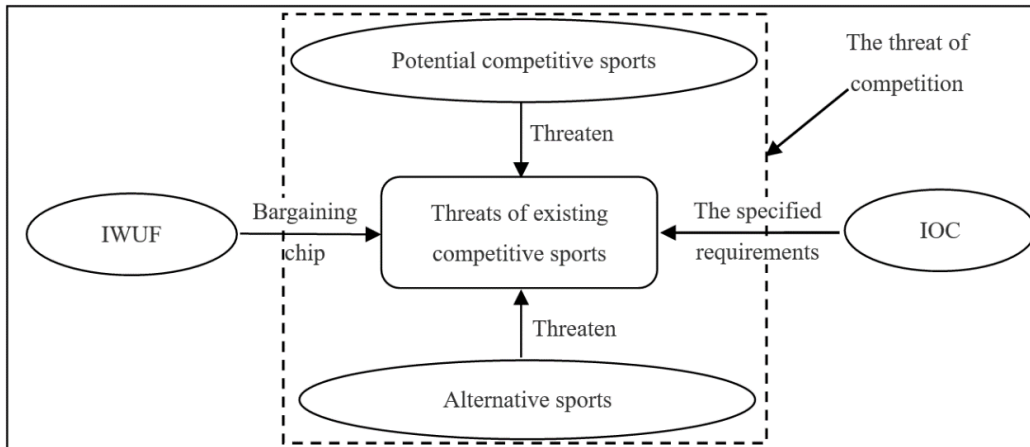


Figure 2. Five-Force Model of *wushu* to entering the Olympic Games.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This research is based on five forces model's research paradigm. The first author sorts out and summarizes the relevant research results of *wushu* applying for Olympic Games, and inquires relevant information and policy documents from the official website of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the International Wushu Federation (IWUF) and the International Federation of Other Sports, and extracts useful information to support the article. The first author classifies and analyses the information obtained according to five forces model, so as to discuss the international competition situation of *wushu* applying for the Olympic Games.

RESULTS

The bargaining power of the IWUF – the bargaining chip of *wushu* applying for Olympic Games

From the perspective of the preconditions for entering the Olympic Games

Wei Jizhong once said, "The four requirements of being cosmopolitan, international, ornamental and operable are the prerequisites for a sports event to enter the Olympic Games. Only by meeting these four requirements can it probably become an Olympic event" [3]. In the cosmopolitan aspect, it means that the international sports organization of the sport is accepted by the General Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF). As early as 1994, the IWUF has become a full member of the GAISF, and it was officially recognized by the IOC in 2002, which shows that *wushu* has

become a worldwide event. In the international aspect, it means that the sport has been popularized in at least 75 countries on four continents, and has been recognized and supported by the Olympic Committee of the country where it is located. According to the statistics of the IWUF, as of August 2022, it has 156 national/territorial member associations across 5 continents [4]. Therefore, the internationality of *wushu* has far exceeded the limited requirements. In the ornamental aspect, since the implementation of the 'Olympic Glory Plan', *wushu* has taken 'high, difficult, beautiful and new' as its development direction, and has become its own system. The number of trainees is about 120 million. In the operability aspect, it refers to the objectivity of competition rules. *wushu* and gymnastics belong to the same kind of competition, and their scores mainly depend on the subjective judgment of referees, so fairness and impartiality can hardly be guaranteed. To solve this problem, the competition rules of *wushu* have been revised eight times [5] and tested by many international, intercontinental and domestic competitions, and its subjectivity has been greatly reduced.

From the cultural point of view

Taoist thought is the foundation of *wushu* thought, and it pays attention to 'Man-nature Harmony'. From the perspective of epistemology, it learns the idea of 'Man-nature Harmony' and shows it, that is, in the process of practicing *wushu*, one understands the moves of *wushu* with one's heart, which can be called understanding of the mind. Human's life and existence are in nature, and they are regarded as natural things.

Ancient martial artists have achieved the effect of nourishing the body by practicing Qi and body, that is, understanding of the body. The so-called 'Man-nature Harmony' means that the understanding of the mind conforms to the understanding of the body, and the mind returns to nature. The *Olympic Charter* classifies the Olympics as a philosophy of life, which is conducive to the comprehensive and coordinated development of people's body and spirit. It can be said that *wushu* culture and Olympic culture have the same goal, but their forms and means are different.

Coubertin, the father of the modern Olympics, once said, the Olympics is not a competition, but a cultural exchange and integration from the heart. The original intention of hosting the Olympic Games is to advocate multicultural blending. It can be seen that the failure of *wushu* applying for Olympic Games has nothing to do with the cultural differences between the east and the west. The failure of *wushu's* bid for Olympic Games leads people to pay attention to this result, but ignore the real reason of the failure. The official reports of the IOC in 2002 and 2013 showed, *wushu* and other events do not have a higher popularity (mass base and degree of interest) than the existing Olympic events [6, 7]. It can be seen that the main reason for *wushu's* failure to enter the Olympic Games is the lack of international popularity of *wushu*. From the cultural point of view, the Olympic Games needs *wushu* culture. From the perspective of development, *wushu* needs the Olympics.

From the perspective of public attraction

According to the IWUF after the end of the 2022 World Games, "At present, we estimate there are about 120 million people in the world practicing Wushu, including more than 70 million youth participants" [8]. IOC President Bach during this period said in an interview, "You have taken the great tradition of Chinese Wushu and brought it into the modern age, making wushu a sport with a truly global appeal today" [9]. It shows that today's *wushu* has a good public appeal. The enlightenment function of *wushu* makes this sport have a certain educational value for people. The *wushu* applying for Olympic Games will surely inspire the enthusiasm of *wushu* enthusiasts, practitioners, researchers and practitioners all over the world for the Olympic Games, and will greatly increase the audience number and broadcast ratings of the Olympic Games. *Wushu* applying for Olympic Games will also promote

the active participation of developing countries and make the Olympic Games more authoritative in today's world, and the IOC can further explore its beneficial value [8]. Nowadays, *wushu* has been an official competition event of Youth Olympic Games and World Games. I believe that the influence of *wushu* on the public will increase greatly in the future, which will lay a good foundation for *wushu* applying for Olympic Games.

The bargaining power of the IOC – the barrier of wushu applying for Olympic Games

With the implementation of the *Olympic Slimming* program, the old Olympic events began to be prepared for danger in times of peace, the new Olympic events began to pursue victory, and alternative events began to covet. making it more difficult for *wushu* applying for Olympic Games. The *Olympic Programme Evaluation Criteria* was issued and implemented in order to better carry out the *Olympic slimming* plan. Bach, the current president of the IOC, also continued the idea of Olympic slimming. Through the implementation of *Olympic Programme Evaluation Criteria*, the IOC not only solved the negative situation of some Olympic projects, but also injected new blood into the sustainable development of the Olympic Games.

After being adjusted in 2012, the *Olympic Programme Evaluation Criteria* formed an evaluation system consisting of 8 evaluation topics, 39 evaluation rules and 74 evaluation indicators, including general situation, governance, history and tradition, universality, popularity, athletes, development of international sports federations/sports, and finance [10].

Then, on June 8th, 2015, the *Olympic programme – Host city proposal: Evaluation criteria for events* was revised again, aiming at integrating the existing indicators, and finally forming an evaluation system consisting of five first-level indicators and 35 second-level indicators of Olympic proposal, added value to the Olympic movement, organizational affairs, popularity and business model [11].

The 35 evaluation indicators are the requirements of the IOC for all Olympic events and non-Olympic events that want to enter the Olympic Games. The Olympic Agenda 2020 was discussed and approved at the 127th plenary session of the IOC, mainly to solve the sustainable development

of the Olympic Games. The basic setting of sports on the Olympic programme has changed from being based on sports to being based on events which improves the possibility of non-Olympic events to entering the Olympic Games. On March 13th, 2021, the IOC launched a new reform measure *Olympic Agenda 2020+5*, which aims to better meet the challenges of the post-epidemic era in the next five years. The release of the New Agenda lists solidarity, digitization, sustainable development, credibility, and economic and financial resilience as the core content. This is not only an initiative for all Olympic participants and stakeholders, but also a higher requirement for the development of the Olympic Games itself and the non-Olympic events to entering the Olympic Games.

Threats from other competitive sports

The competitors of *wushu* applying for Olympic Games are refer to all non-Olympic sports that compete with *wushu* applying for Olympic Games. These non-Olympic sports come from countries around the world, both old and new sports; There are sports that have never entered the Olympic Games, as well as sports that have entered to the Olympic Games but removed; these non-Olympic events are competitors of process of *wushu* applying for Olympic Games. In order to fully understand the non-Olympic events, take the World Games as an example, and take the International World Games Association (IWGA), which manages the World Games, as an entry point to learn about the sports competing with *wushu* applying for Olympic Games.

The IWGA is an international organization established by some non-Olympic international sports organizations after realizing that their sports to enter the Olympic Games opportunities are slim. The World Games is a comprehensive games composed of the corresponding sports events of these international individual organizations. Samaranch greatly appreciated the hosting of the World Games, calling it the Second-level Olympic Games. At the same time, the IOC is highly recognized by the IWGA, and it will provide some funds when the World Games are held. At present, the IWGA has a total of 39 member units, including the IWUF, some of which have Olympic sports. According to statistics, 15 out of 39 sports have become Olympic sports, and 24 (including *wushu*) have not yet to entered the Olympic Games [12]. However, apart from these

23 sports, there are other potential sports and alternative sports competing with *wushu* applying for Olympic Games. For example, Esports and other events of *wushu* except routine, etc.

Threats from existing competitive sports

In 2011, *wushu* applied for the third time to enter the Olympic Games, and was listed as one of the eight candidate sports. The eight sports are *wushu*, karate, baseball and softball, bowling, squash, rock climbing, roller skating, and fancy water [13]. These events will undoubtedly pose a threat to *wushu* applying for Olympic Games. After the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games was announced, karate, baseball and softball, rock climbing, roller skating and fancy water skiing were successfully shortlisted. The 2024 Paris Games was selected into the sports announced, the street dance (break dance), skateboarding, rock climbing, surfing four sports into the Olympic Games ; karate, baseball and softball two sports were removed. The competitive relationship between these successful sports and *wushu* cannot be maintained, and the sports removed from the Olympic Games are competitors of *wushu*.

It can be seen from the 2013 IOC's 2020 Olympic Games: Shortlisted International Federations Report [7] (Table 1). In terms of history, it should be noted that the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) was formed by the merger of the International Baseball Federation (IBAF) and the International Softball Federation (ISF) in 2013, with their founding years being 1938 and 1952 respectively. It can be seen that compared with the other three international federations, the IWUF has been established for a short time. In terms of the number of member countries, the IWUF obviously lags behind them, which shows that the international popularity of *wushu* at that time was not as good as that of karate and other three sports, which is one of the main reasons why *wushu* missed the Tokyo Olympic Games. Since its development in 2013, the IWUF now has 156 member countries. Compared with the WSF (149) [14], the WKF (197) [15] and the WBSC (140) [16], it can be seen that the internationalization of *wushu* has developed rapidly in recent ten years. In terms of the number of participating in comprehensive sports, comprehensive games of this article refer to the World Games, the World University Games, the Commonwealth Games, the All-Africa Games, the Pan American

Games, the Mediterranean Games and the Asian Games. There are two authoritative sports games in which *wushu* enter, the World Games and the Asian Games. *Wushu* first entered the World Games in 2009 and did not return until 2022. Compared with the other three events, the limitations of *wushu*'s international promotion are obvious. In terms of ticket sales rate and attendance rate, the ticket sales rate of the World Wushu Championships accounts for 40% of the total, and the attendance rate accounts for 42%. The attendance groups include athletes, coaches and referees. Look at the sales and attendance of the other three sports, all of which far exceed *wushu*. Among them, the attendance rate is inseparable from the total number. The attendance rate of Wushu World Championships is 42%, with only 38,000 people, while the attendance of the World Baseball and Softball Championships reached nearly one million. Compared with this, it can be seen that the international recognition of *wushu* was extremely low at that time. Under this circumstance, it is excusable that *wushu* lost the

vote in the 2013 IOC Executive Board meeting. In terms of digital media, the daily page views, followers and fans of official website of the sport's International Federation, reflect the public attraction and attention of the sport. At that time, there were only 1,000 daily page views in official website of the IWUF, and there was almost no social attention. Judging from the digital media of the other three International Federations, their sports have a strong degree of internationalization, high recognition, and far more influence. Compared with it, the IWUF is far from reaching their level. The combined effect of the ticket sales rate and attendance rate of the World Championships, the daily visits of the International Federation of official website, the number of followers and the fans reflects the international popularity of the sports. Therefore, it can be concluded that the low popularity of *wushu* in 2013 is the main reason for *wushu*'s failure to enter the Olympic Games. In the process of entering the Olympic Games, the threat from the existing competitive sports is mainly 'popularity'.

Table 1. Summary of relevant information of four sports in 2013.

Variable	IWUF	WSF	WKF	WBSC
History (established time)	1990	1967	1970	2013
Number of member states	104	124	177	133
Number of participating in comprehensive sports games	2	5	5	5
Ticket sales rate (last World Games)	40%	92%	78%	74%
Attendance (last World Games)	42%	70%	81%	98%
Television coverage and rebroadcast	coverage: 3 countries in Asia and Europe. Rebroadcast: 1 country	coverage: 129 countries on five continents. Rebroadcast: 125 countries	coverage: 112 countries on five continents. Rebroadcast: 110 countries	coverage: 162 countries on five continents. Rebroadcast: 50 countries
Digital Media Attention	On average, official website views it 1,000 times a day, and social media pays little attention to it.	Official website has about 27,000 daily page views, 74,000 followers of social networking sites and 25,000 special fans.	Official website has about 190,000 daily page views and 25,000 followers on social networking sites.	Official website's website has about 23,000 daily visits and about 2,500 social media followers.

Note: **IWUF** International Wushu Federation; **WSF** World Squash Federations; **WKF** World Karate Federation; **WBSC** World Baseball Softball Confederation.

Source: 2020 Olympic Games: Shortlisted International Federations Report [7].

In addition, we should also pay attention to the powers given by the IOC to the host country, such as the successful entry of karate, a local event, in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, and the successful entry of break dancing, a local event, in the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. Then, will the baseball and softball sports originated in the United States successfully enter the Olympic Games in Los Angeles in 2028? This issue was confirmed in 2023. Baseball and softball, baseball and tennis, cricket, squash, and flag rugby have officially become new events for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. Three of these projects originate from the United States, it has caused great controversy on the internet.

Threats from potential competing sports

In addition to the 23 competitors who did not participate in the Olympic Games in the World Games, *wushu* also has some emerging and potential competitions. Become a potential competitive sports must meet two conditions, the first is to have their own International Federations, the second is has not been accepted by the IOC and the GAISF. Take Electronic Sports as an example, which is a sports event in which electronic games are held through the Internet. At present, the highest international organization of Esports is the Global Esports Federation (GEF), which was established in Singapore on December 26th, 2019. Today, the GEF has more than 100 member countries distributed on five continents [17]. Esports as a new competitive sports, the vast majority of the audience for young people. Since Esports was classified into the category of sports, the GEF has been committed to the entry of Esports into the Olympics.

However, in April 2017, IOC President Bach said that Esports does not remove the violence factor, there will be no possibility of entry. With the wide spread of Esports in the world, it already has quite strong influence and discourse power in the world. Internet results of the 'League of Legends Global Finals' held in November, 2021 show that nearly 30 platforms around the world broadcast in 16 languages, with an average audience rating of more than 20 million per minute, and the highest online viewing exceeded 4 million. In China's live broadcast platform Bilibili, there were nearly 500 million interactions. In view of the international influence of Esports, Bach once published an open letter on the official website of the IOC saying that the possibility of Esports entering the Olympic Games will

be explored. Today, Esports will be unveiled at the 2023 Asian Games in Hangzhou. Through the above analysis, it can be seen that the attraction of teenagers, promotion mode and channels, social influence and other factors of Esports will become the core competitiveness of their future entry into the Olympic Games. Esports has the core advantages that *wushu* lacks. If Esports and *wushu* compete for the Olympic Games at the same time in the future, these factors will greatly threaten *wushu* applying for Olympic Games.

Threats from alternative sports

The events settings of *wushu's* three Olympic bids are all *wushu* routines [18]. *Wushu* successfully entered the Youth Olympic Games, and its event setting is also *wushu* routines (including Machinery routine of *tai ji chuan*) [19]. Therefore, the events of *wushu* applying for Olympic Games involved in this research refer to the *wushu* routines that have entered the Youth Olympic Games after three Olympic bids. With the successive failures of *wushu* applying for Olympic Games, many scholars in Chinese *wushu* circles began to question whether *wushu* routines are suitable for entering the Olympic Games, and put forward the development strategies of sanda [20], Chinese wrestling [21], *taiji pushing hands* [22] and other events to replace *wushu* routines for applying to Olympic Games. From the cultural point of view, these events have the same cultural characteristics as *wushu* routines, and their local characteristics are obvious, which can highlight the oriental implication. However, in fact, *wushu* routines combined with the Olympic spirit, whether normative, standard or international, are more suitable for representing *wushu* applying for Olympic Games. Their international spread in recent decades has gradually strengthened *wushu's* internationalization, which is incomparable to other events.

CONCLUSIONS

With the dynamic change of the Olympic development pattern, the competition for applying for Olympic Games will become increasingly fierce. For *wushu* applying for Olympic Games, only by accurately grasping the Olympic development pattern, the international competition situation and the development of the sports itself, can we formulate a correct development strategy, turn favourable competitive factors

into our own advantages in time, and realize the strategic upgrade of *wushu* from 'entry into the Youth Olympic Games' to 'entry into the Olympic Games'. Based on the research paradigm of five forces model, this study analyses the chips and barriers of *wushu's* application to enter the Olympic Games, clarifies the threats of existing competitive sports, potential competitive sports and alternative sports to *wushu's* application to enter the Olympic Games, and helps to recognize the competitive advantages, disadvantages and external threats of *wushu's* application to enter the Olympic Games. According to the analysis of the results, the author suggests that the future research on internationalization of *wushu* and application for admission to the Olympic Games should focus on how to improve the popularity of *wushu*, youth attraction and social influence.

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