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Generation Y women in maritime and leadership

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Abstract

Hopes, expectations and ambitions of people change in the course of time. People from different eras have different characteristics from those of the previous ones that are previous generations. These characteristics are reflected in the leadership behaviours they prefer and expect from the people they work with. In our age, people forming the workforce are generally from Generation X and Generation Y, which are different from each other. In this study, the aim is to compare the general leadership expectations of these two generations in maritime sector and discuss which style(s) best suit Generation Y maritime women, who will be in majority in the workplaces in the near future. To do this, we used some of the statements from the survey which is originally prepared for MENTORESS Project. We compare the responses given by women belonging to Generation X and Generation Y and discuss which leadership styles are better for Generation Y. In the end, it is found that two leadership styles, democratic and participative, seem to suit better to Generation Y women in maritime.

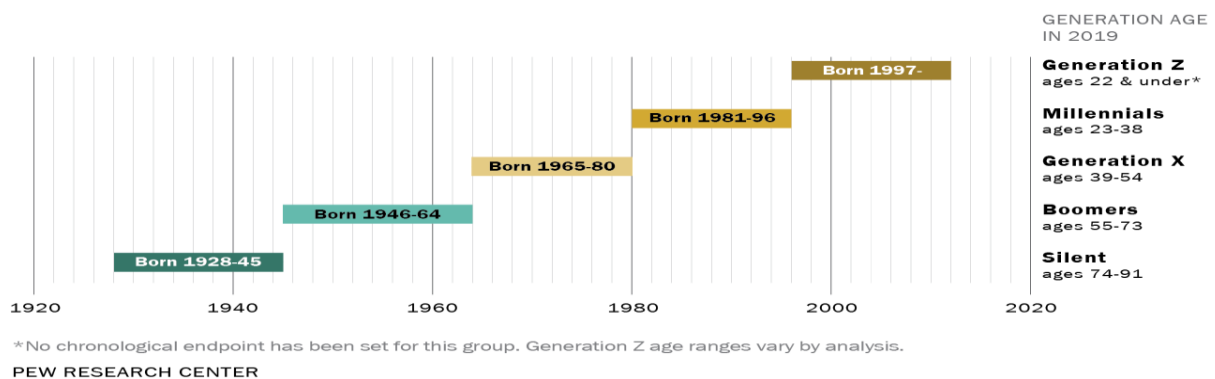
***MENTORESS** (Maritime Education Network To Orient and Retain (Women) for Efficient Seagoing Services) – (Erasmus + KA2 – 203 Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education)

1. Introduction

A generation is described as the entire body of individuals born and living at about the same time. It also refers to the term of years, roughly 30 among human beings accepted as the average period between the birth of the parents and the birth of offspring [1]. It is defined as a group of individuals who have lived during the same period in history, and therefore share a number of practices and representations, experience the same historical events and are shaped by the same events, trends and developments [2] (Venter, 2017; Duane and Mccammon, 2003, McCrindle and Wolfinger, 2011). It is agreed upon that the grouping of generations has started in 1890s when huge changes in social and economic life started to take place. The period each generation refers to changes from study to study. There are no standard definitions for the time a generation begins and ends since they are affected by major cultural, political and economic markers. Each generation is unique because it has its own traits and values [2].

The following table shows the period of each generation.

Table 1. Grouping of generations (PEW Research Center).



Generations and Age 2019 <https://www.pewresearch.org/topics/generations-and-age/> Accessed 22 April 2019

Each generation has its own strenghts, weaknesses and general traits. In the following table, these are seen for the three generations which form the workforce today [3].

Table 2. General traits of baby boomers, Gen X and Gen Y (Millennials).

	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
Communication	Face-to-face	Email or IM	'Just text me'
Attitude to Work	Loyal to my job	I work to live	Play then work
Information	Print me a copy	Send me a copy	I'll Google it
What they want at work	Respect my title	Respect my ideas	Respect my skills
Areas of Focus	Focus on process	Focus on results	Focus on involvement
Priorities	Work comes first	Family comes first	Friends come first

On the other hand, people who are born at specific times may have different generic generational characteristics since their upbringing, historical background and socioeconomic status may be different from each other. It is important to know a person's exposure to and experience of specific things which play an important role in the reactions of people.

As is seen, people's reactions to specific events change not only from generation to generation but also from person to person since there are individual differences among people. Also, people from different generations are affected by different phenomena to a different degree. That is why it is important to compare the reactions of Gen X and Gen Y maritime women to the same events to determine what kind of leadership is the best for Gen Y women.

2. Method

In this research, we made use of the statements in the survey used in MENTORESS Project. To start with, we used 10 questions from the survey to see if women in maritime have problems in acquiring leadership skills and to discuss leadership problems women face. These statements reflect the responses of men and women in maritime on leadership issues. On seeing that there were some problems in this area, we used another set of questions from the survey to measure the attitude of the women from Gen X and Y to specific events, aiming to determine their leadership expectations and practices. We used the next set of questions to see the reactions and ideas of the same women to certain situations. Some of these statements are indirect results of their reactions. 22 women respondents representing Generation X and 46 women respondents from Gen Y participated in this part of the survey.

3. Findings

The responses to the statements in this part of study showed that there are some problems for maritime women with regard to acquiring leadership skills. The table and graph below show the statements used in this part and a comparison of responses by men and women in maritime to these statements [4].

Table 3. Statements used in this part and percentage of responses by women and men.

NO	STATEMENT	I Agree (%)	
		WOMEN	MEN
1	Male staff accepts women as equal on various tasks onboard ships.	33	54
2	Men are preferred even if the female crewmembers have the same qualifications.	82	66
3	Women in maritime are likely to experience some form of sexual harassment.	81	66
4	The successful achievements of a female are usually ignored.	64	39
5	When a female crewmember makes a mistake, the feedback and reaction are exaggerated.	70	43
6	Starting from the entry stages, the women are told and advised about the negative aspects of maritime career.	64	67
7	The decisions and ideas of female staff are continuously criticized and questioned.	63	39
8	I feel the women personnel have to work harder to be accepted as equal by the male counterparts and the supervisors	62	46
9	Women working at sea have less chance to be promoted to higher positions than men.	70	49
10	I think the behaviour of male staff discourages the female staff to perform better.	64	49

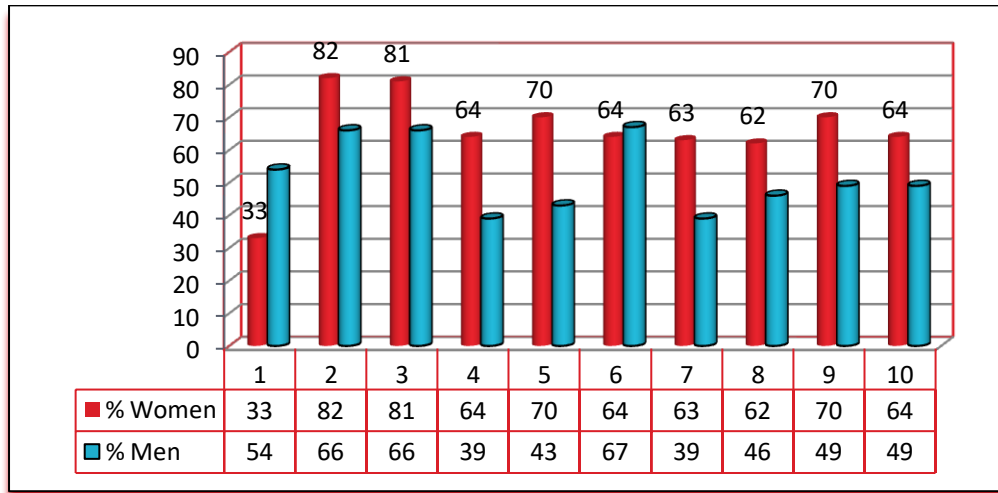


Figure 1. Percentage of responses given by women to the statements in this part.

As is seen in the table and figure given above, there are differences between the percentages of the responses given by women and men to the statements. That signals that women and men perceive the situations about leadership differently. Although both sides accept that there are some problems regarding the situations concerning leadership, the men perceive these situations less acutely. For example, while a majority of women believe that there is a diversity problem onboard, most men believe while there is a problem, it is not as big as women think. While maritime women say their decisions and ideas are continuously criticized and questioned, men don't agree with them. While women that believe when they make a mistake, an exaggerated reaction is given by men and they have to work harder to be accepted as equal by the male counterparts and the supervisors, men believe these situations are not as bad as is claimed. All in all, the statements assessed in this part say a lot about the leadership problems women face in maritime sector and it is easy to come to the conclusion that there is a leadership problem on the side of women in maritime.

Everything is changing fast, and so are the women in maritime. Therefore this study aims to see if the problems concerning leadership are perceived as sharply by the two successive generations of women (Generation X and Generation Y) in maritime today. With an eye to compare the general leadership expectations of these two generations in maritime sector and to discuss which style(s) best suits to Generation Y maritime women, who will be in majority in workplaces in the near future, two sets of statements from the same survey are given. The first set of statements aim to see their perceptions and ideas on the situations they face in maritime sector, which shape their attitudes and behaviours.

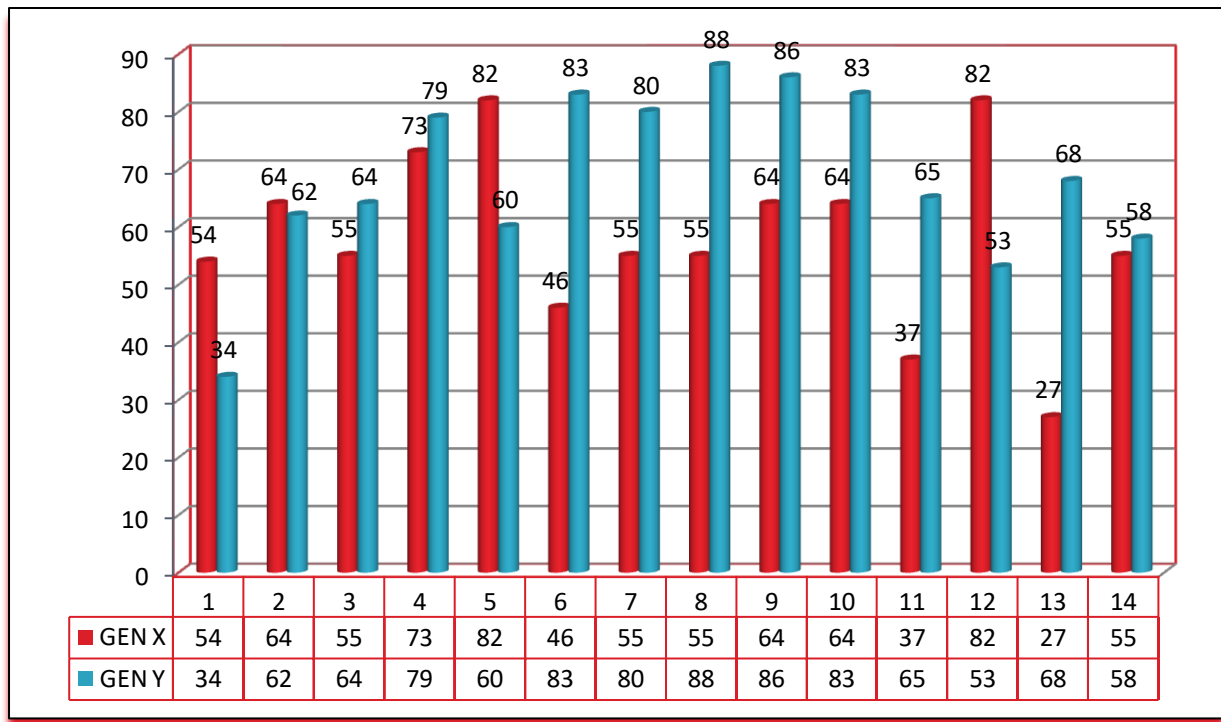


Figure 2. Responses reflecting the perceptions of women on maritime issues.

Table 4. Situations likely to affect reactions of women.

NO	STATEMENT	I Agree (%)	
		GEN X	GEN Y
1	The staff are not prejudiced against individual differences (such as gender, race).	54	34
2	I feel men think that female participation in jobs aboard a ship is not suitable for maritime culture.	64	62
3	Working on board a ship is mentally more tiring for the female crew members.	55	64
4	Men prefer working with other men because they think women aren't strong enough to work onboard a ship.	73	79
5	Men think the presence of women onboard will limit their behaviours.	82	60
6	Women in maritime are likely to experience some form of sexual harassment.	46	83
7	When a woman succeeds in her job, male staff will be jealous of her.	55	80
8	It is hard for women to find appointments on board ships because the ship owners are biased against women	55	88
9	The male colleagues believe that the presence of females onboard a ship will cause trouble there.	64	86
10	Starting from the entry stages, the women are told and advised about the negative aspects of maritime career.	64	83
11	The decisions and ideas of female staff are continuously criticized and questioned.	37	65
12	The female crew members feel lonely and helpless onboard the ship.	82	53
13	I think the behaviour of male staff discourages the female staff to perform better.	27	68
14	Subordinates on ship may sometimes ignore the orders of female crew.	55	58

As is seen from the table, the responses change from generation to generation, which is a sign of the changing perceptions and ideas of maritime women. They are shaped by the general characteristics of the generations they are from. Drawing from the responses given by the women, it can be concluded that both Gen X and Gen Y women face some problems in the maritime sector. However, Gen X women perceive them less acutely, which may be because of their generational characteristics. From this comparison of the statements, we can draw the conclusion that Gen X women don't feel the prejudice against them as much as Gen Y women. They find the work they do tiring, but not as much as Gen Y women do. They feel negative attitudes of men towards them and feel lonely and helpless on board. However, they are not negatively affected by these

perceptions. As for Gen Y women, they feel the prejudice against them strongly and find working on board tiring more than Gen X women do. They don't think their presence limits the behavior of men and they feel the threat of harassment more than Gen X women do. Gen Y women think that men don't want to work with them, that they criticize them, talk about the negative aspects of the sector, therefore women are discouraged. When we take the responses of Gen Y women into consideration, it is seen that they are affected by negative attitudes more deeply than Gen X women are. They feel there is more jealousy for their achievements and more hardships in finding a job in the sector.

Despite this, they don't feel themselves alone and helpless onboard as much as Gen X women do. This shows their obstinate and challenging character. On the other hand, the ease of communication due to technology and the opportunity to reach social media accounts may be helping them overcome the feeling of loneliness [5].

There are some differences between the reactions of maritime women of both generations to the hardships they face. Figure 3 and Table 5 show us the statements we use to compare their reactions.

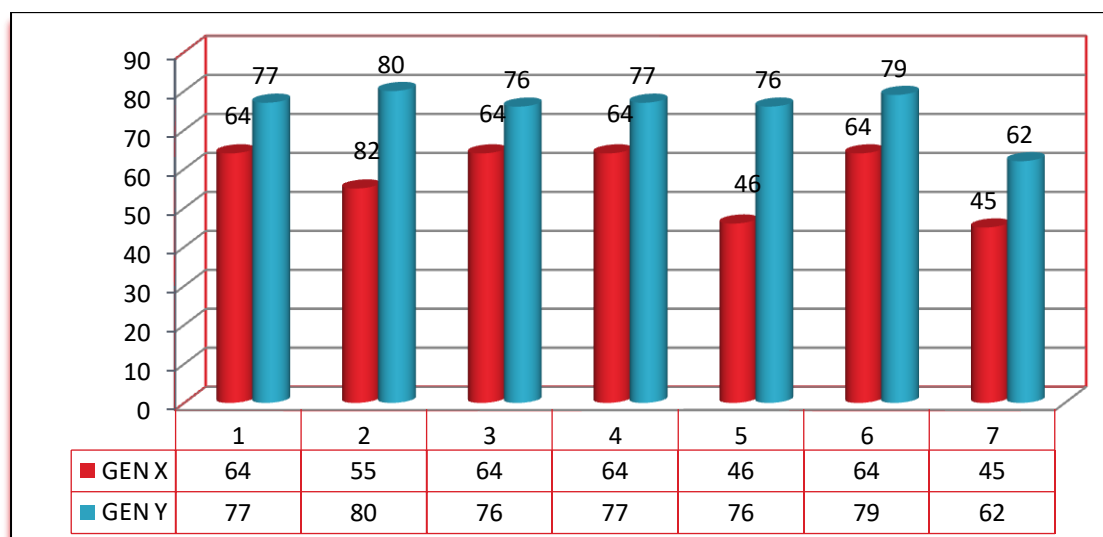


Figure 3. Percentage of women's reactions.

Table 5. Comparison of reactions changing from Gen X to Gen Y.

NO	STATEMENT	I Agree (%)	
		GEN X	GEN Y
1	Female personnel's relations with the supervisors/senior staff are efficient and effective.	64	77
2	Female personnel's relations with the peer staff onboard are efficient and effective.	55	80
3	Female personnel's relations with the junior staff/subordinates are efficient and effective.	64	76
4	After their first experiences, the female crew still want to stay to serve on board.	64	77
5	I have a role model.	46	76
6	I would encourage other women to work in maritime sector.	64	79
7	I receive support to from my family or friends work on a ship.	45	62

As the table shows very clearly, when it comes to the relations with staff of different levels on board, Gen Y feels themselves at a better place than Gen X. Despite all the hardships, they want to continue working on board and encourage other women to do the same. The percentage of those with a role model has also increased dramatically. It is very probable that technological developments have a hand in this.

Taking the data that can be classified as the reactions of women in maritime on gender issues and general characteristics of Gen X and Gen Y into consideration, it can be concluded that members of Gen Y are

mostly in good relationships with the colleagues. Although they find working on board more tiring than Gen X women do, and they feel they are not welcome onboard, they go on struggling instead of giving up. That shows they are perseverant and challenging in the face of hardships, they are also better mentors than Gen X women. The data shows that they get support from the people around them, and their families mostly support their preference to be a member of maritime staff. On the other hand, male staff they will work with don't want the women in their vicinity since they have second thoughts such as being limited by them. Two main areas of complaint for Gen Y women are the difficulty in finding a job, and harassment on board.

As is seen from the facts above, it is clear that Gen Y women need a leadership that is different from Gen X women have. Their way of leading is also different from that of the previous generations. The people in each generation have their own leadership traits. That means both the way they lead and the way they want to be led may be different from those of other generations depending on the social, economic and political conditions of the era they live in. That's why a leader should recognise the different work characteristics between generational groups and apply leadership styles that will positively contribute to employee motivation [6].

Not every single person born within a specific time frame portrays generic generational characteristics. The content of upbringing, historical background and socio-economic status of individuals play an important role in their personal character traits, expectations in the workplace and reactions to the problems [7].

There is a lot of research done on the characteristics of generations. According to them, characteristics attributed to Gen Y are quite different from those of the previous generation, which is Gen X. The most significant characteristic is the usage of technology to a great extent. Most traits of Gen Y are related to extensive usage of technology. They are defined as highly creative, achievement-oriented, diverse and flexible. Research on generations shows that Gen Y wants to be challenged and expects to work with positive, bright and creative people in less hierarchical organizations. They want to have engaging experiences that develop transferable skills and prefer working in an environment that is supportive and rewarding for extra effort and excellence.

Technology, which Gen Y is born into, provides them freedom, mobility and access to the world of information. Most importantly, they can telework, which gives them autonomy. By teleworking they have the freedom to organize their working time, which means having more time for family, friends and hobbies. Gen Y people like working, but working is not at the center of their lives. They can do several jobs simultaneously, but they are not workaholics.

They are called selfish by other generations. They are self-confident and self-sufficient, competitive, but not obedient. They want to work in flexible conditions and don't like to be controlled. In fact, being controlled often discourages and demotivates them because they feel they are not relied on.

Work environment and managerial style are important for them. They also like to get feedback and mentoring from their superiors, want to express their ideas freely and believe that being successful means being a good team player. They don't have strong connections with their workplaces. They can leave their job for a better position or more money. They can take risks easily and don't mind making mistakes. They believe they learn from mistakes and consider this a learning opportunity.

In research focusing on managerial functions of Gen Y including leadership, it is found that the most preferred leadership style is extreme democratic leadership. This is because Gen Y needs the collaboration, guidance and motivation and demands a free and independent work environment, which calls for a democratic leadership. The fact that they want to be told what should be done and not being controlled after that also calls for democratic leadership as an ideal style for them.

On the other hand, they think a leader should allow his/her followers to participate in decisions. S/he should give independence to the followers and make them feel valued. They can perform well and are committed to achieving the goals and objectives of the organization even when the leader is absent. This calls for participative leadership. What's more, the ideal work environment for Gen Y is collaborative, achievement oriented and highly creative which is also supported by participative leadership [8].

Gen Y maritime women who are both affected by certain generational traits of Gen Y and unique conditions of jobs in maritime sector including seagoing ones are in need of sound leadership which can address the problems they face effectively and efficiently. Before deciding the proper kind of leadership for them, the conclusions drawn from the survey can be taken into consideration.

It can be said that Gen Y women in maritime have good relations with staff of all levels. They are not discouraged easily and are ready to strive in harsh conditions. They encourage their peers to take part in the same work despite the problems they have. The support from their families and friends have a role in their perseverance. Despite many negative responses to the statements in the first part (Table 4), they go on their own way stubbornly and work in the sector without losing their enthusiasm. Most of them have a role model, which is a clear sign that they belong to Gen Y. As can be read between the lines, they are confident, highly competitive, multicultural and diversity focused people. As Gen Y members, they are extremely tech savvy, which may be why they don't feel lonely and helpless in maritime as much as Gen X women.

One of the characteristics of Gen Y is the demand for mentoring which is important for women in maritime. Like the members of Gen Y from other sectors, Gen Y women in maritime should give special importance to mentoring and encourage the women in maritime to have mentors.

They should also encourage them to use technology as much as possible in a number of activities ranging from e-mentoring to e-learning for self development to be competitive.

Gen Y has a weak sense of belonging to the workplace, but Gen Y women in maritime should try to support the sense of belonging in maritime sector especially for sea going jobs, since there are not many vacancies for them and since changing jobs very often may cause bad reputation.

Individualism as well as belonging to a team is important for Gen Y. Therefore, Gen Y women in maritime should learn to work in teams, but should also be self-sufficient and be able to express their ideas freely. They should be given the chance to be part of the decision-making process so that they can have the responsibility of their decisions. This is why participative leadership is a good practice for them. On the other hand, being free and deciding freely on the achievement of goals make Gen Y motivated. Therefore Gen Y women in maritime should be given tasks that they will carry out by themselves and taste the happiness and satisfaction of achievement. That is the basic principle of democratic leadership. Because of these reasons, two kinds of leadership, participative and democratic, seem to fit best the needs and expectations of the women in maritime sector.

4. Conclusions

Members of Gen Y, which is the first global generation, have already started to take managerial positions. They are a lot different from their predecessors, so the way they are treated should also be different from the other generations. They are self-centered and they don't live to work; they work to live. They question everything and put a lot of things above work. They are born into technology, which has a tremendous effect on all aspects of their life from doing their work to spending their free time. Since they are so different, the way they are led and the way they lead should be different, too.

Gen Y women in maritime are no exception. Like all members of Gen Y, they have distinct characteristics. Drawing conclusions from the survey, it is clear that Gen Y women in maritime have efficient and effective relations with the staff of all levels. They are not discouraged easily and are ready to strive in harsh conditions. They encourage their peers to take part in the same work despite the problems they have. The support from their families and friends and having a role model affect them positively. Despite many negative responses to the statements in the first part, they still go on working on board without losing their enthusiasm.

Upon combining the data from our survey with general characteristics of Gen Y, it is seen that two kinds of leadership styles, democratic and participative, seem to work better than the others to make the most out of the Gen Y women in maritime. They like to collaborate with their peers, share their views with the others and be flexible to adapt to new ways of doing things. They also keep the communication channels open and respect other people. With these characteristics, democratic leadership style seems to be a good style of leadership for them, to lead and to be led. In addition to this, although they complain that their decisions and ideas are continuously criticized and questioned, Gen Y women in maritime want to participate in decision-making processes and want their peers to take part in it. They prefer a collaborative work environment where all members are supported and encouraged to create a positive and motivating working place. This can be possible by participative leadership. Although it is not possible to claim that only one or two leadership styles can work with a group of people and others cannot, it is clear that democratic and participative leadership styles are better for Gen Y maritime women compared with the others.

Everything is changing very fast, and the number, expectations and contributions of the women in maritime along with their problems are no exception. The next study in this field may be on the comparison of the leadership styles suitable for the following generation, Generation Z, with that of previous generations.

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