

Brainlabs' Guide to

Unveiling the full potential of Advantage+ Shopping Campaigns



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In partnership with  Meta



brainlabs

Introduction

Creating a groundbreaking shift in the realm of paid social advertising, Meta unveiled its suite of AI-powered “Advantage” tools, poised to kickstart the AI Social Ads revolution. With the aim to address the privacy challenges impacting the industry since 2021, Meta has positioned its tools as the catalyst for a new era of transformative possibilities for advertisers.

Much like Google’s Performance Max, Meta’s Advantage+ Shopping Campaigns tool is the jewel in the Advantage suite, an automated campaign type created in an effort to simplify the ad creation process, by taking care of the audience targeting and ad creative elements for you. That’s right, *another* algorithm-first advertising model.

But what makes Meta Advantage+ stand out, and does it actually work? In true Brainlabs fashion, we tested its efficacy. Want to know how advertisers can make the most of this powerful tool?

Read on!

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Why use Advantage+ Shopping?

Meta's Advantage suite of advertising automations ranges from single-step solutions like Advantage Custom Audience, which dynamically expands an audience to improve delivery performance based on your optimization goal, all the way to the complete campaign solution of Advantage+ Shopping, that automates creative, targeting, optimization and destination to maximize results.

Meta claims there are three core benefits for advertisers and agencies:

1

Enhanced Performance Efficiency

Meta states that advertisers can achieve a reduction of 17% in Cost Per Acquisition, coupled with a 32% increase in Return on Ad Spend, with the use of Advantage+ Shopping Campaigns.

2

Accelerated Time Efficiency

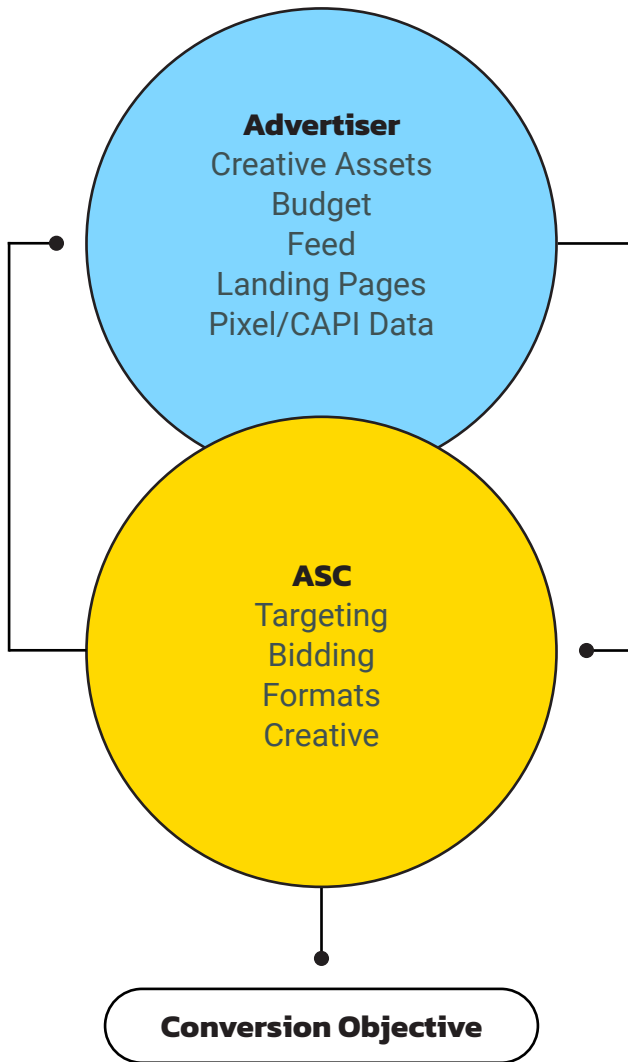
The once time-intensive tasks of audience identification and ad set structuring, crucial for optimal performance, are now seamlessly orchestrated by the algorithm, saving advertisers valuable hours.

3

Streamlined Automated Testing

With the capacity to assess up to 150 diverse creative combinations on a per-user basis, this campaign type swiftly pinpoints the most effective ads, facilitating dynamic optimization.





How ASC Works:

Advantage plus takes your creative assets, feed information, landing pages and conversion data and uses that to optimize targeting, bidding, formats and creative combinations in order to maximize your conversion objective.

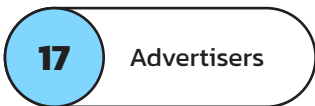
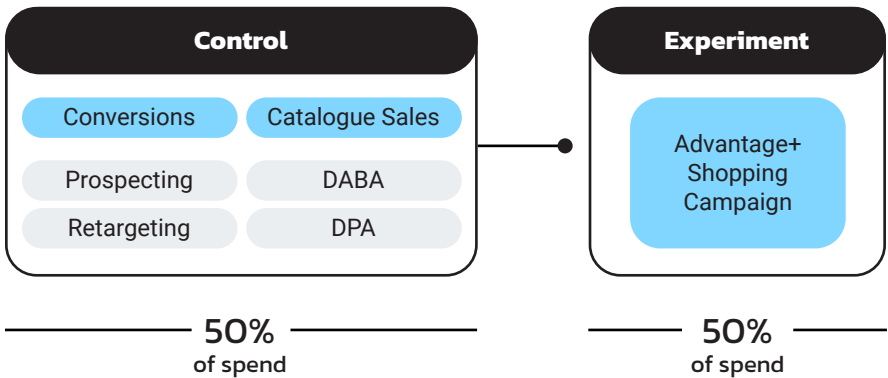


Assessing the impact of Advantage+

Since its launch, we've been keen to understand whether the results touted by Meta can be achieved for our clients. We set out to deliver a structured testing framework across our account with the aim of validating two hypotheses.



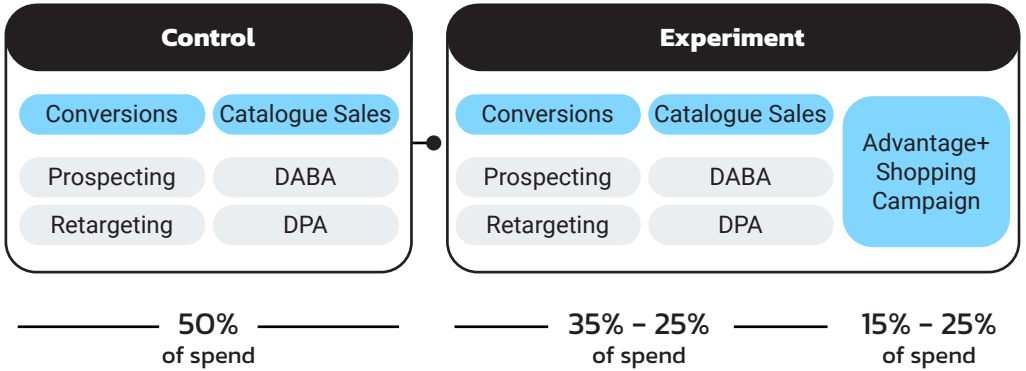
Does Meta's Advantage + Shopping Campaigns deliver better performance than a traditional prospecting and retargeting campaign structure?





Hypothesis 2

Is there a sweet spot for the percentage of our Meta performance budget that should go to Advantage+ Shopping Campaigns?



1 Advertiser

4 Brands

10 Tests

How did we find the answers?

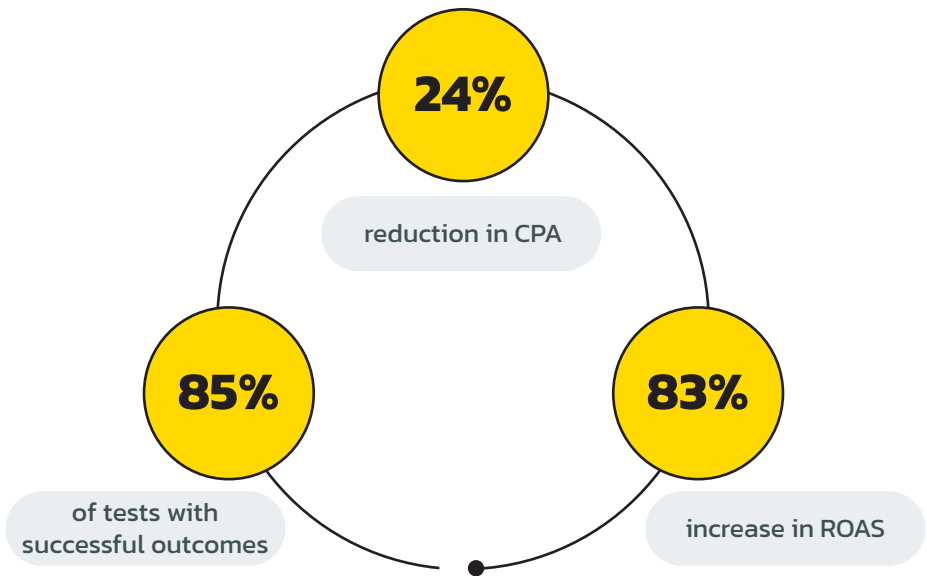
We utilized **Hippocampus**, Brainlabs' agency-wide proprietary testing technology, to create the parameters of the tests we wanted to run.

This test "idea" was then accessible to all client teams, who were able to create experiments to help us answer our most critical questions. Over the coming months, we were able to carry out 30 experiments for 16 retail and subscription businesses across the UK.



Reviewing our findings

Our testing revealed impressive results, demonstrating a median CPA reduction of 24% when ASC are executed at performance budgets of 30% or higher. These findings showed consistency, with only two tests diverging from favoring the automated solution. On top of that, in instances where businesses initially encountered unsuccessful test outcomes, subsequent testing with optimized creative and data setups resulted in ASC consistently outperforming traditional prospecting and retargeting campaign structures.



Source: Brainlabs. Based on 54 campaigns and 16 Brainlabs clients across 23 split tests whose earliest start date is 10.11.2022 and latest end date is 30.06.2023. Methodology: descriptive analysis or aggregation of descriptive statistics outcome of these studies.



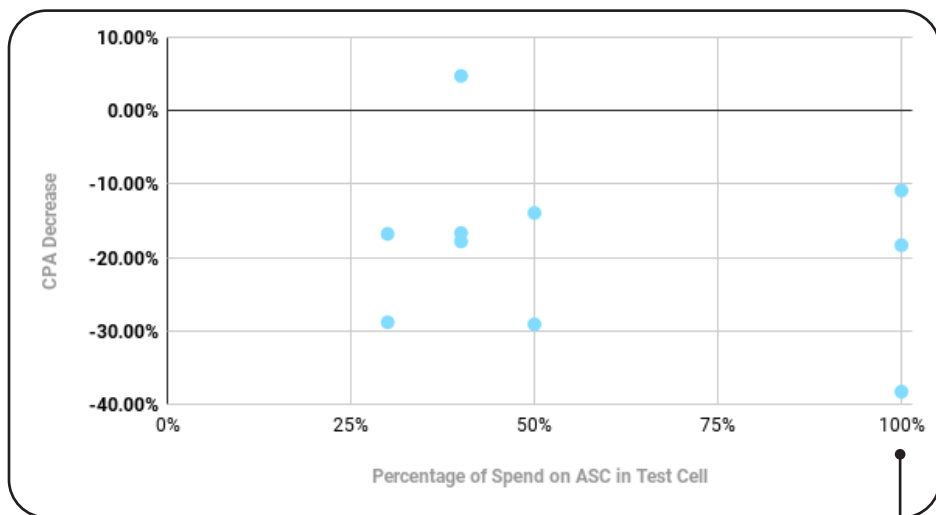
How much should you spend on ASC?

Although Meta suggests that ASC should be used in combination with other campaign types in order to drive the best results, we wanted to understand what that meant in terms of spend. Should we put 30% of our budget in ASC or should we be going 50/50?

To determine this, we took a portfolio of brands and ran A/B tests where each experiment ran with the test cell consisting of either 100%, 50%, 40%, or 30% ASC.

The results were inconclusive - with all tests performing equally well in terms of CPA efficiency. In fact, the biggest change in efficiency occurred where we split tested against a 100% ASC cell. This, aligned with our broader ASC testing, suggests the tool may well be a complete performance solution, allowing other campaign types to focus on reach and engagement metrics.

Testing ASC at different Budget Percentages



Biggest change in efficiency

Source: Based on 18 campaigns, 4 brands and 1 Brainlabs client across 10 split tests whose earliest start date is 01.04.2023 and latest end date is 30.06.2023. Methodology: descriptive analysis or aggregation of descriptive statistics outcome of these studies



So how do you get the best from Advantage+?

Meta's AI campaign solution employs automation to efficiently optimize ad delivery, rapidly learning the most effective creative to engage your audience and enhance the browsing experience for optimal results.

However as marketers, our job is to ensure the machine has everything it needs to do this as quickly and effectively as possible. As such, our two key levers for ensuring ASC is guided by the right strategy are:



Give ASC the data it needs

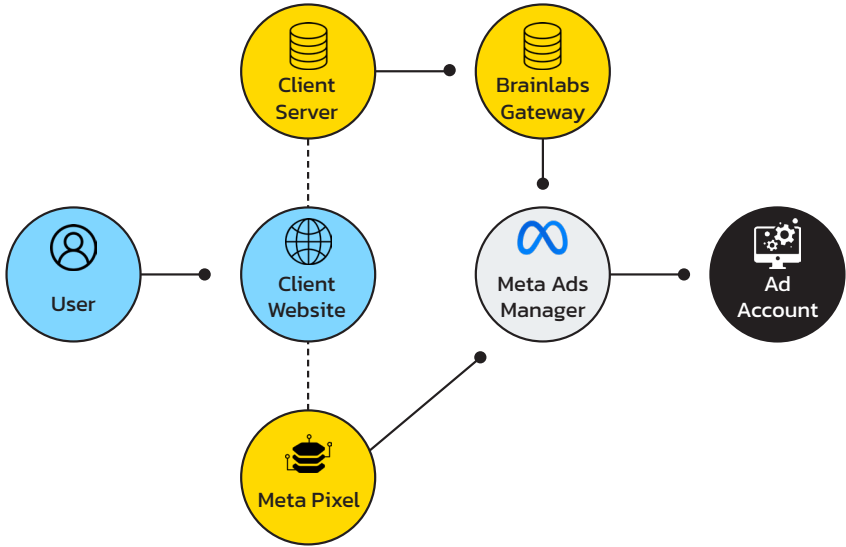
ASC can only optimize based on results that it can track, and considering the privacy landscape, without intervention, Meta would not have visibility on a large range of successful on-site actions. The danger here is that the AI model ignores particular creative and audience combinations that do drive action, purely because of its lack of visibility on the action.

As such, we've prioritized partnering with Meta to deliver an efficient system for clients to get their server-side data into Meta, through the CAPI-Gateway (see diagram). With this setup, the ASC campaigns can see roughly 19% more conversions, and we can be confident that successful consumer journeys are always prioritized.

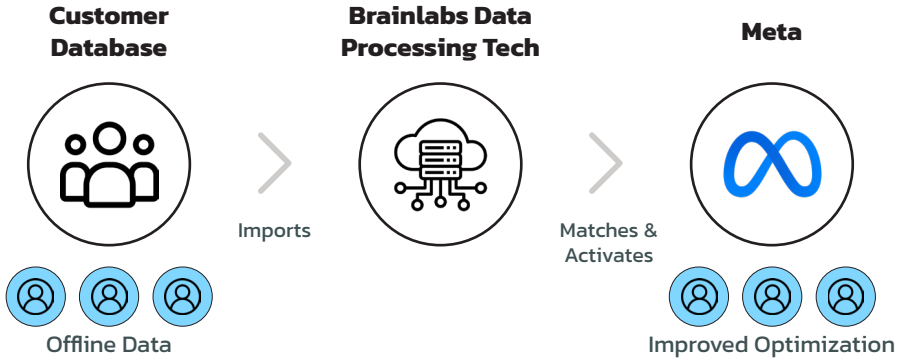
With CAPI setup, we're also able to provide richer details on our conversion data through offline conversions, allowing us to align ASC's objective with our business' objective even more closely than through site-based tracking alone.



CAPI-Gateway in action



Offline Conversion Optimization



How Offline Conversion Optimization works:

CAPI can be used to feed in our client's own first-party data into the ad platform, in order to bid towards their most valuable conversions and improve efficiency.





Provide Meta with a creative playground to test across

With the success of ASC relying heavily on its ability to test creative and audience combinations so quickly to achieve the desired result, it is most effective where it has a broad enough range of creatives across which to test. We recommend focusing on these three areas to maximize performance:

1

Optimize your feed

If you have a product feed, make sure you include it within your ASC campaigns as here's where you'll find the best results. Similar to the classic DABA/DPA structure, Meta's AI will serve your products to users that it thinks are likely to buy those products. With ASC, you get this optimization alongside your standard assets, therefore boosting performance.

2

Maximize your formats

The days of static and carousel ads are over. In order to maximize your efficiency you need to have tailor-made video creatives that will feel at home across Reels and in-feed video.

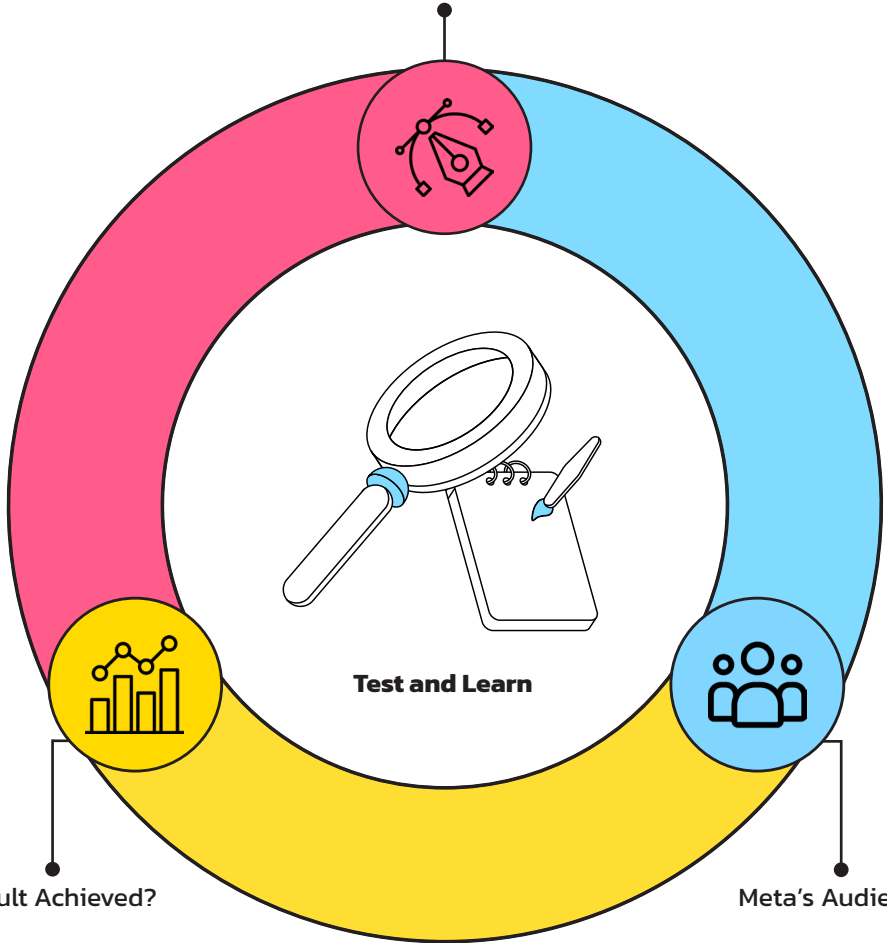
3

Don't forget UGC

We have seen through testing that UGC outperforms ad creative for engagement within stories and reels placements and, with the use of Reels & Stories continuing to grow, providing the campaign with content that will excel here should provide a boost to the algorithm. We're currently exploring this further through testing to validate the hypothesis.



Your Creative



Result Achieved?

Meta's Audience



What to consider when setting up your Advantage+ campaigns

As with any campaign type, ASC comes with its own set of considerations. Throughout our testing journey, we uncovered three important aspects to keep in mind when setting up your campaigns:



Set your main conversion goal up as a purchase event

Meta sees ASC as a campaign to drive sales, but don't let that deter you! Our testing showed ASC can still outperform traditional campaign types when trying to drive subscriptions, sign-ups, and leads. Due to the sales-focus, you're only able to select a Standard Website Purchase Event in-platform as the optimization objective.



Our recommendation

Ensure you tag your main conversion event as a Website Purchase to allow you to get the most out of ASC. While this might be time-consuming if you're not currently set up in that way, we recommend prioritizing this on your roadmap.





Expect to see some less than ideal ads out in the wild

ASC's machine learning algorithm works by testing many asset combinations against different audiences to identify what works best to drive conversion. As part of its exploration, there may be ad variants served that fall outside of what you would like to see. At first, imperfect creatives will likely see weaker engagements and conversions; however, the algorithm learns from this to stop serving creative combinations that don't lead to the desired result. Over time, creatives will begin to align with what consumers are looking for.



Our recommendation

While this might raise some initial questions and requires a significant level of trust in Meta's systems, the secret to the campaign's success is that it's always learning. Set expectations within your business that they may see these imperfect creatives. Let them know it won't last forever and highlight the performance benefits that justify the few poor ad experiences.



Don't stop running other campaign types

Meta isn't suggesting a one-campaign account structure, and neither are we. ASC still needs other activity to drive growth for your business. Since ASC is a performance tool, its job is to sweep up demand. Therefore, with its lack of targeting capabilities and creative control, it shouldn't be relied on to generate demand.



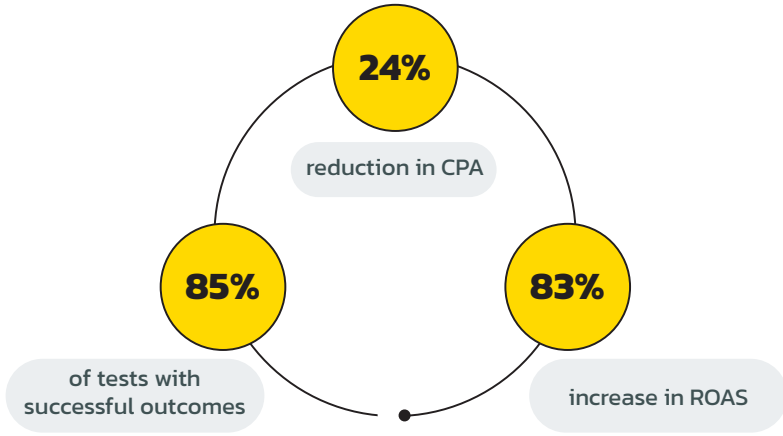
Our recommendation

Ensure you're investing the money you're saving on each conversion towards driving engaging content to your key audiences through traditional campaign types to expand product and brand knowledge and affinity.



Our Verdict

To summarize, our testing has shown highly impactful and repeatable benefits to running Advantage+ for shopping campaigns:



The data privacy changes of the last couple of years have introduced significant changes. Marketers need to upgrade their toolkit quickly and efficiently. Ingesting the right data via CAPI, and testing AI capabilities is the new norm for marketers of all sizes. This is a great example of how to do it and what kind of business impact can be expected.



Nicolas Arrivé, Manager, Marketing Science at Meta



So, how can you reap the benefits?



Get testing

The results speak for themselves, proving ASC's integral role in your performance strategy on Meta. Leverage Meta's split testing tools to pinpoint the optimal percentage of your performance budget that should be set aside to use ASC.



Optimize your data & creative

Make sure to supply the algorithm with a comprehensive range of inputs, from sophisticated data signals that define precise goals, to a varied suite of creatives to maximize user-level testing.



Refocus time on Meta to non-conversion media

While ASC can yield exceptional results with reduced time investment, the temptation to shift your entire social budget into this campaign type should be resisted. Instead, allocate the saved time and resources towards diversifying your efforts to other campaign types that drive demand. This could involve fostering brand or product awareness, or generating consideration.

What does this mean for the future of advertising?

Our in-depth reviews of Google's Broad Match and Performance Max, and now this review of Meta's ASC leave us certain that AI-driven solutions are the future of digital advertising.

Yet while these campaign types are the activation method that will drive the best results, they aren't a one-stop-shop for all things advertising and in a future where all advertisers embrace these tools, the only way to get a competitive edge is through the right strategy.

So, embrace AI - the results tell us we'd be foolish not to - but remember AI campaigns are merely there to maximize the rate at which your creative finds its target audience to drive the desired outcome. They are not a replacement for human-driven innovative strategy, but a tool to help you bring it to life.

If you'd like to speak to one of our experts, please contact us at
partnerships@brainlabsdigital.com





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