



An Analysis of Socio-Economic Factors and Consumer Motivations Influencing Organic Food Consumption: Barriers, Public Policy, and Sustainable Economic Practices

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Abstract. With the surge in demand for organic products, driven by health-conscious and eco-aware consumers, this study delves into how organic food consumption can pave the way for sustainable economic practices. Through a detailed survey of 270 respondents in Lucknow, the research unpacks consumer motivations—highlighting their preference for freshness, chemical-free produce, and environmental responsibility. However, barriers like limited availability and unclear certification hinder greater adoption. Utilizing advanced correlation and regression analyses, the study reveals how factors like income and product quality shape organic food spending. The findings emphasize the critical role of public policy in driving sustainable consumption by enhancing organic product availability, tightening certification standards, and incentivizing both producers and consumers. With strategic policies, governments can leverage the organic food market to promote long-term environmental and economic sustainability. This study not only maps the future of organic consumption but also shows how public policy can transform consumer behavior into a force for global sustainability.

Keywords: Organic food consumption, Economic sustainability, Public policy

1 Introduction

The rapid growth in consumer interest towards organic products, driven by concerns over health, environmental sustainability, and ethical consumption, reflects a broader societal shift towards more sustainable living practices. Organic products, especially food, are seen as healthier, more natural alternatives to conventionally produced goods, free from synthetic pesticides, fertilizers, and genetically modified organisms (GMOs). This trend has significant implications for the economics of sustainability, which explores how economic systems can be organized to support long-term ecological balance and reduce environmental harm. As consumers prioritize organic products, they are not only influencing market dynamics but also contributing to the development of more sustainable agricultural practices [5, 9].

A key component of sustainability in this context is the way organic farming reduces the negative environmental impacts of conventional agriculture, such as soil degradation, water pollution, and biodiversity loss. Organic farming promotes ecological harmony by minimizing synthetic inputs and encouraging biodiversity, which directly links to the goals of sustainable development. As consumer demand for organic products rises, the expansion of organic farming practices could significantly enhance environmental conservation efforts, aligning with the principles of environmental economics and sustainability economics [7].

To better understand the factors that shape consumer behavior in this sector, it is crucial to explore consumer perceptions of organic products. In particular, factors like health benefits, environmental responsibility, and ethical production processes influence how consumers view organic products. These factors form the foundation of the economics of sustainability, as they reflect how economic decisions made by individuals can support wider environmental goals.

Public policy plays a vital role in fostering sustainable consumption patterns. By supporting organic agriculture through subsidies, tax incentives, and educational programs, governments can help lower the barriers to entry for organic producers and

make organic products more accessible and affordable for consumers. Furthermore, clear and transparent labeling practices can reduce consumer confusion about organic products, helping to bridge the knowledge gap and ensure that consumers are making informed decisions [7]. These policies not only encourage sustainable consumption but also promote a circular economy, where the environmental impacts of production and consumption are minimized, and resources are used efficiently.

In conclusion, the economics of sustainability is deeply interconnected with consumer perceptions and public policy. As society moves towards more sustainable consumption patterns, driven by organic products, public policy interventions are essential in supporting this shift by promoting accessibility, educating consumers, and incentivizing sustainable production practices. This intersection of consumer behavior, market dynamics, and policy efforts offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how sustainability can be achieved in the organic product market.

2 Objective

The objective of this study is to analyze the socio-economic factors and consumer motivations influencing organic food consumption, with a focus on identifying key drivers such as income, product quality, and environmental responsibility. Additionally, the study aims to explore barriers like limited availability and certification challenges, and assess the role of public policy in promoting sustainable consumption practices.

3 Methodology

This study is based on a field survey with a sample size of 270 respondents from Lucknow, selected using Cochran's formula (1977) [2] as given in Table 1 to represent the population. The formula is given in equation 1 as follows:

$$n = n_0 / (1 + (n_0 - 1)/N) \quad (1)$$

Where, n is the required sample size, n_0 is the sample size derived from Cochran's formula of sample size for unknown population and N is the total population.

Table 1: Cochran's Sample Size Calculation Based on Population Size and Error Margin

Cochran's Method (95 % confidence)	Population Size	Error Margin	Sample Size
	Unknown	5%	385
	6.6 lakhs	5%	267
	6.6 lakhs	6%	267

Source: Adapted from Cochran, W. G. (1977). *Sampling techniques* (3rd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

As of May 2021, Lucknow has been divided into six administrative zones. Data was collected from six administrative zones, with three wards randomly selected per zone, and 15 respondents from each ward. Descriptive analysis [1] techniques such as percentage, frequency, Pearson's Correlation [6] and Spearman's Rank Correlation [8] were employed to measure linear and non-linear relationships, respectively. Point-Biserial Correlation [4] analyzed the relationship between continuous and dichotomous variables. T-tests and ANOVA [3] compared means across demographic groups, providing comprehensive insights into the data. The software used for the analysis purpose is MSEXCEL and STATA.

4 General Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents:

The demographic profile of the respondents provides a comprehensive view of various characteristics such as gender, age, education, occupation, income, marital status, family pattern, caste, religion, and dietary preferences. Table 2 below shows the general description of the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Sl. No.	Demographic Variables	Groups	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	164	60.74
		Female	106	39.26
		Transgender	0	0

		Total	270	100
2	Age	15-29	119	44.07
		30-64	147	54.44
		65 & above	4	1.48
		Total	270	100
3	Education Qualification	Not literate	0	0
		Literate up to Primary level	0	0
		Upper primary/Middle level	06	02.22
		Matriculate/ Secondary	15	05.55
		Higher Secondary	22	08.14
		Diploma/certificate course	53	19.62
		Graduation	132	48.88
		Post-Graduation & above	42	15.55
		Total	270	100
4	Occupation	Government Service	78	28.88
		Self-employed	144	53.33
		Private Job	48	17.78
		Others	0	0
		Total	270	100
5	Monthly Income	0-25000	0	0
		25001-50000	44	16.29
		50001-75000	40	14.81
		75001-100000	58	21.48
		100000 & above	130	48.14
		Total	270	100
6	Marital Status	Married	160	59.26
		Unmarried	105	38.89
		Widow	1	0.37
		Divorce	2	0.74
		Separated	2	0.74
		Total	270	100
7	Family Pattern	Joint Family	74	27.41
		Nuclear Family	196	72.59
		Total	270	100
8	Caste	General	103	38.15
		OBC	141	52.22
		SC	17	06.30

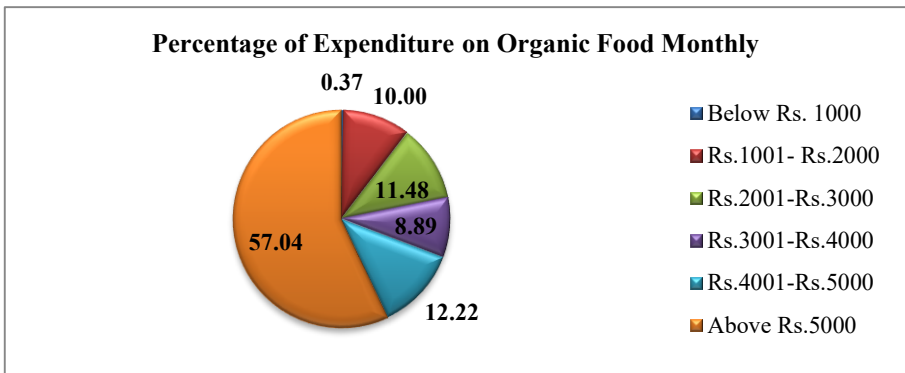
		ST	09	03.33
		Total	270	100
9	Religion	Hindu	256	94.81
		Muslim	11	4.07
		Others	3	1.11
		Total	270	100
10	Diet	Vegetarian	167	61.85
		Non-Vegetarian	103	38.15
		Total	270	100

Source: Primary Survey

In Table 2, it shows that the majority of respondents are male (60.74%), with most falling between 30-64 years old (54.44%). Nearly half (48.88%) have completed graduation, and a significant number (15.55%) hold post-graduate or higher qualifications. Over half are self-employed (53.33%), and nearly half (47.79%) earn more than ₹100,000 per month. Most respondents are married (59.26%) and live in nuclear families (72.59%). A large portion belongs to the Other Backward Classes (OBC) (52.22%), with the majority following Hinduism (94.81%). Additionally, 61.85% of respondents are vegetarian. Overall, the respondents are primarily middle-aged, well-educated, self-employed, and have significant income levels.

4.2 Current Scenario of Expenditure on Organic Food

As consumer preferences for organic products evolve, understanding expenditure patterns helps researchers analyze a variety of economic, social, and environmental impacts. Consumers' ability to spend for the purchase of organic food products is assessed and explained below:

Figure 1: Percentage of Expenditure on Organic Food Monthly

Source: Primary Survey

Figure 1 shows the monthly expenditure on organic food, with 57.04% of consumers spending over Rs. 5000, indicating a significant investment in organic products. The next largest group (12.22%) spends between Rs. 4001 and Rs. 5000, followed by 11.48% spending Rs. 2001 to Rs. 3000. Smaller percentages spend Rs. 1001 to Rs. 2000 (10%) and Rs. 3001 to Rs. 4000 (8.89%), while only 0.37% spend less than Rs. 1000. This suggests that a majority of consumers are willing to dedicate a substantial portion of their budget to organic products. Below the pie-chart shows the percentage of expenditure on organic food monthly by the respondents.

5 Correlation Analysis:

Correlation analysis is a statistical method used to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between two or more variables. It quantifies the degree to which changes in one variable are associated with changes in another. Below different types of correlation is done to find out the association between the demographic factors, reasons to buy organic food, reasons not to buy organic food and the expenditure on organic food of consumers.

5.1 Pearson Correlation

The Pearson correlation coefficient is a measure of the linear relationship between two continuous variables. Below is the correlation between monthly expenditure on organic food and monthly income.

Table 3: Correlation between Monthly Expenditure on Organic Food and Monthly Income

	Correlation co-efficient	p-value
Monthly Income	0.70	0.00*

Source: Estimated from Primary Data; * statistically significant at the 5% level

In Table 3, the correlation coefficient of 0.70 indicates a strong positive relationship between monthly income and expenditure, meaning that as income increases, expenditure also rises. The p-value of 0.00 confirms this relationship is statistically significant, showing that the likelihood of this result occurring by chance is extremely low. In summary, there is a strong and significant positive correlation between income and expenditure.

5.2 Spearman Correlation

Spearman correlation is a non-parametric measure of rank correlation that assesses the relationship between two variables by evaluating the strength and direction of their monotonic relationship. Below is the correlation between monthly expenditure per month on organic food and education qualification.

Table 4: Correlation between Monthly Expenditure per month on Organic Food and Education Qualification

	Correlation- Coefficient	p-value
Education Qualification	0.00	0.95

Source: Estimated from Primary Data; * statistically significant at the 5% level

The table 4 presents the correlation between monthly expenditure on organic food and education level. The correlation coefficient between the two variables is 0.00, indicating no linear relationship between the amount spent on organic food and the education level of respondents. The corresponding p-value is 0.95, which is much higher than the conventional significance level (e.g., 0.05). This suggests that the result is not statistically significant, meaning there is no evidence to support a meaningful association between education level and expenditure on organic food. Therefore, education does not appear to influence how much individuals spend on organic food based on this data.

Now the correlation between monthly expenditure on organic food and reasons to buy organic food and reasons not to buy organic food is shown below. The Table 5 presents the correlation between monthly expenditure on organic food and various reasons for buying organic products. Several reasons show statistically significant correlations at the 5% level, as indicated by the asterisks.

Table 5: Correlation between Monthly Expenditure on Organic Food and Reasons to Buy Organic Food

Reasons to Buy Organic Products	Correlation-Coefficient	p-value
Chemical free	0.34	0.00*
Nutritious	-0.01	0.83
Better for Environment	0.05	0.45
Fresh	0.14	0.02*
Support Farmers	-0.08	0.22
Brand Varieties Available	0.05	0.39
Safe	-0.08	0.17
Socially Acceptable	0.07	0.24
Ingredients Listed	0.16	0.01*
Perceived as Better	0.00	0.99
Wide Range Availability	-0.01	0.92

Certified	0.06	0.35
Good Value	-0.04	0.56
Sustainable Future	0.01	0.87

Source: Estimated from Primary Data; * statistically significant at the 5% level

The correlation analysis shows that consumers who spend more on organic food prioritize chemical-free products (correlation = 0.34, $p = 0.00$) and freshness (correlation = 0.14, $p = 0.02$), indicating these factors significantly influence their spending. Additionally, attention to ingredient transparency is important, as shown by a correlation of 0.16 ($p = 0.01$). Conversely, factors like nutrition (-0.01, $p = 0.83$), being better for the environment (0.05, $p = 0.45$), and supporting farmers (-0.08, $p = 0.22$) do not show significant correlations with expenditure. Overall, consumers who spend more on organic food are primarily motivated by concerns about chemical content, freshness, and ingredient listings, while nutrition and environmental benefits have less impact on spending.

Table 6: Correlation between Monthly Expenditure on Organic Food and Reasons Not to Buy Organic Food

Reasons Not to Buy Organic Products	Correlation-Coefficient	p-value
Expensive	-0.02	0.77
Unavailability	-0.17	0.01*
Availability of Less Varieties	-0.03	0.61
Lack of Certification	-0.15	0.02*
No Health Benefit	-0.05	0.43
Does not Last Long	0.08	0.20
Lack of knowledge	-0.10	0.10
Forget to Buy	0.02	0.79
Unable to Distinguish Between Conventional and Organic Food Products	-0.05	0.45

Source: Estimated from Primary Data; * statistically significant at the 5% level

The Table 6 shows the Spearman correlation between monthly expenditure on organic food and various reasons not to buy. Unavailability has a significant negative correlation ($-0.17, p = 0.01$), indicating that limited availability reduces spending. Lack of certification also negatively impacts expenditure ($-0.15, p = 0.02$). However, factors like price, fewer varieties, and no health benefit do not show significant correlations, suggesting they have little influence on spending. Other factors, such as short shelf life and lack of knowledge, also show weak, non-significant correlations. Overall, availability and certification are the main barriers to higher expenditure.

5.3 Point-Biserial Correlation

The point-biserial correlation measures the relationship between a continuous variable and a binary variable. It assesses the strength and direction of this association. In the table below, it shows the correlation between monthly expenditure on organic food (continuous variable) and three nominal variables: gender, family type, and diet. Correlation coefficients range from -1 to 1 , indicating the strength and direction of the relationships, while p-values indicate their statistical significance.

Table 7: Results of Point-Biserial Correlation

	Monthly Expenditure on Organic Food	Gender	Family Type	Diet
Monthly Expenditure on Organic Food	1	0.14	0.04	0.04
p-values	-	0.03*	0.56	0.56

Source: Estimated from Primary Data; * statistically significant at the 5% level

In Table 7, the correlation between gender and monthly expenditure on organic food is 0.14, showing a weak but significant relationship ($p = 0.03$), suggesting gender has a small influence on spending. However, family type and diet both have very weak correlations (0.04) and non-significant p-values (0.56), indicating no meaningful impact on expenditure. Overall, only gender shows a weak but significant effect, while family type and diet do not significantly influence spending on organic food.

5.4 ANOVA

The ANOVA results from Stata show the F-statistic and the associated p-value for each categorical variable in the regression model, where the dependent variable is monthly expenditure on organic food. Here's an interpretation of these results below.

Table 8: ANOVA Results between Monthly Expenditure on Organic Food and Other Variables

	F-statistics	Prob > F
Marital Status	1.91	0.17
Caste	1.12	0.34
Religion	1.24	0.29
Main occupation	1.19	0.31

Source: Estimated from Primary Data

The ANOVA model in Table 8 tests whether categorical variables like Marital Status, Caste, Religion, and Main Occupation significantly affect monthly expenditure on organic food. The F-statistic checks if the means of expenditure differ across groups, but none of the variables have p-values below the 0.05 threshold. This indicates that Marital Status, Caste, Religion, and Main Occupation do not significantly influence expenditure. Therefore, these variables do not explain the variation in spending on organic food.

6 Multiple Linear Regression Model

Several significant variables have been identified for a multiple linear regression model to explain monthly expenditure on organic food. These include gender, reasons for buying organic food (such as concerns about chemical content, freshness, and

ingredient transparency), reasons not to buy (such as unavailability and lack of certification), and monthly income. These factors play important roles in influencing spending patterns on organic food and are therefore included in the MLR model to know their significant impact on the dependent variable expenditure per month on organic food.

Equation of Multiple Linear Regression model according to the study is as follows:

$$\text{Expenditure per month on organic food} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Gender}) + \beta_2(\text{Reason: Chemical-Free}) + \beta_3(\text{Reason: Fresh}) + \beta_4(\text{Reason: Ingredients Listed}) + \beta_5(\text{Unavailability}) + \beta_6(\text{Lack of Certification}) + \beta_7(\text{Monthly Income}) + \epsilon \quad (2)$$

Table 9: Results of Multiple Linear Regression Model

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value	P-value
Gender	641.80	361.66	1.77	0.08
Reason: Chemical-Free	115.58	165.45	0.70	0.49
Reason: Fresh	363.33	166.94	2.18	0.03*
Reason: Ingredients Listed	69.32	169.64	0.41	0.68
Reason: Unavailability	-48.51	181.74	-0.27	0.79
Reason: Lack of Certification	178.73	235.87	0.76	0.45
Monthly Income	0.05	0.00	13.04	0.00*
Constant (_cons)	-1784.12	1300.54	-1.37	0.17

Source: Estimated from Primary Survey; * statistically significant at the level of 5% ($p < 0.05$); Prob > F = 0.0000; R-squared = 0.5083

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis in Table 9 provide insights into the factors influencing monthly expenditure on organic food. The model explains approximately 50.8% of the variance in monthly expenditure, as indicated by the R-squared value of 0.5083. This suggests that the independent variables collectively

provide a moderate level of explanatory power for the dependent variable, which is monthly expenditure on organic food.

Starting with the significant predictors, monthly income emerges as a highly significant factor (coefficient = 0.0542, $p = 0.000$), indicating a strong positive relationship between income and expenditure on organic food. For every unit increase in monthly income, the expenditure on organic food increases by 0.054 units, suggesting that higher-income individuals tend to spend more on organic products. Additionally, reason fresh, which represents the importance of freshness in purchasing organic food, shows a positive and significant impact on expenditure (coefficient = 363.33, $p = 0.030$). This indicates that consumers who prioritize freshness spend significantly more on organic food, with an expected increase of 363.33 units in expenditure.

However, several other variables do not show a statistically significant influence on expenditure. For instance, the coefficient for reason ingredients listed is 69.32, but with a p -value of 0.683, this variable does not significantly impact how much consumers spend on organic food. Similarly, lack of certification (coefficient = 178.73, $p = 0.449$) and reason chemical free (coefficient = 115.58, $p = 0.485$) are not significant predictors of expenditure, indicating that these factors do not play a crucial role in determining current spending levels. Unavailability of organic food also shows a negative but non-significant relationship with expenditure (coefficient = -48.51, $p = 0.790$), suggesting that accessibility issues may not be a strong deterrent for those who already purchase organic products.

The variable gender has a positive coefficient of 641.80, indicating that male (as per the coding) is associated with higher expenditure on organic food. However, with a p -value of 0.077, this relationship is not statistically significant at the 5% level, though it approaches significance, implying a marginal influence of gender on spending. Finally, the constant term ($_cons$) is negative (coefficient = -1784.12), but with a p -value of 0.171, it is not statistically significant. This suggests that when all the

predictors are set to zero, the baseline expenditure on organic food is not meaningfully different from zero.

In conclusion, the analysis indicates that monthly income and freshness are the key drivers of expenditure on organic food. Other factors, such as ingredient transparency, certification, chemical-free attributes, and gender, do not have a statistically significant impact on spending in this dataset. These findings highlight the importance of economic factors and product quality in shaping consumer spending behavior on organic food.

7 Conclusion and Policy Suggestions

The findings from the correlation and regression analyses provide significant insights into the factors influencing consumer expenditure on organic food. The strong positive correlation between income and expenditure highlights that organic food consumption is largely driven by higher-income individuals, while regression shows that concerns about freshness and chemical-free products also play pivotal roles. Conversely, negative correlation depicts that barriers such as unavailability and lack of certification significantly reduce expenditure, signaling critical areas where public policy interventions could enhance consumer access to and trust in organic products.

7.1 Making Organic Products More Accessible

The correlation analysis shows that unavailability of organic products negatively impacts consumer expenditure. To address this, public policy should focus on:

- **Infrastructure Development:** Governments should invest in supply chain infrastructure to ensure that organic products are more widely available in both urban and rural markets. This can include subsidies for local organic farmers to improve distribution channels, particularly in underserved areas.
- **Support for Small Organic Farmers:** Policies that provide financial support or tax incentives to small organic farms can help increase production and

distribution, thereby reducing availability issues. This support can be tailored to ensure that organic products are available at more competitive prices, making them accessible to a broader demographic beyond higher-income groups.

7.2 Increasing Consumer Confidence through Certification

The analysis found that lack of certification reduces consumer spending on organic products, highlighting the importance of trust and transparency. To build consumer confidence:

- **Strengthening Organic Certification Standards:** Governments can introduce or tighten certification regulations for organic products to ensure that products labeled as "organic" meet clear, verifiable standards. This could include mandatory certification processes and regular audits to reduce fraud and misinformation in the market.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Alongside certification, public awareness programs can be implemented to educate consumers on what organic certification entails, and why certified products are better for health and the environment. This can help bridge the knowledge gap identified in your analysis.

7.3 Promoting Sustainability and Supporting Organic Farming

The positive correlation between consumer expenditure and factors like freshness and chemical-free content indicates that these are key motivators for organic consumption. Public policy should capitalize on these drivers while also promoting sustainable agricultural practices to ensure long-term environmental and economic sustainability:

- **Subsidies and Incentives for Organic Farming:** Governments should provide financial incentives, such as subsidies or tax breaks, to encourage

farmers to adopt organic farming methods. These practices not only enhance environmental sustainability by preserving soil health and biodiversity but also ensure a steady supply of organic products to meet consumer demand.

- **Consumer Incentives for Organic Products:** Alongside support for producers, consumers could benefit from financial incentives such as rebates or tax breaks for purchasing organic products. This would reduce cost barriers and make organic products more accessible, encouraging broader adoption of sustainable consumption habits.
- **R&D for Sustainable Agriculture:** Allocating government funds for research and development (R&D) in organic farming techniques can improve crop yields and cost-efficiency, benefiting both producers and consumers. Investing in innovative farming solutions will ensure that organic agriculture remains viable and competitive in the long term.

7.4 Ensuring Economic Sustainability through Education and Awareness

The education qualification analysis did not show a significant correlation with organic food expenditure, indicating that merely being educated does not necessarily increase organic consumption. Therefore, targeted educational campaigns about the environmental and health benefits of organic products can further drive sustainable consumption:

- **Incorporating Sustainability in Curriculums:** Schools and universities should include sustainability education, focusing on the environmental impact of food choices. This will create long-term cultural shifts in consumer behavior.
- **Public Health Campaigns:** Government-sponsored campaigns that highlight the health benefits of organic products could motivate more people to adopt

organic consumption habits. These campaigns can specifically target low- and middle-income groups, using nutrition labeling and advertisements to emphasize the advantages of organic food.

7.5 Ensuring Equity and Expanding Access to Organic Products

There is a positive relationship between monthly income with organic food expenditure so it indicates that policies must address income disparity to ensure equitable access:

- **Income-Sensitive Organic Food Programs:** Targeted programs can be designed for lower-income households, such as providing organic products in school meal programs or offering organic food stamps to bridge the access gap.
- **Urban-Rural Divide:** Policies should ensure that rural populations have similar access to organic products as urban consumers. Investments in rural distribution channels, such as farmers' markets or cooperative buying schemes, can help close this divide.

In short, consumer expenditure on organic food is influenced by factors such as income, freshness, and chemical-free attributes, but barriers like availability and certification gaps hinder market growth. Public policy has a crucial role to play in addressing these issues, both by improving access to organic products and by fostering consumer trust through stronger certification and awareness programs. By aligning policies with the goals of the economics of sustainability, governments can encourage a more widespread adoption of organic products, thus promoting both environmental sustainability and long-term economic growth.

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