

## VALUE OF KNOWLEDGE: WITH THE PERSPECTIVE OF INTERNATIONAL ROAD TRANSPORTATION BUSINESSES

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### Abstract

*Acquiring knowledge, making it available by processing it and bringing new information by converting it are the main process of knowledge management. While societies are shaped in the scope of production by the successive industrial revolutions; the qualitative-quantitative complexities that have arisen on information have led to the question of how to handle it better. The implicit-explicit knowledge transformation process supported by automation systems shows itself in the transportation sector as well. The understanding of business based on knowledge management is prevalent especially in airline and maritime transportation. Thanks to being among the largest road transportation fleets in Europe, Turkey plays an important role in the international road transportation market. Also, this tremendous fleet is often shipped and managed in pieces by small businesses, knowledge management activities in the road transportation sector arouse curiosity. In this exploratory study, in-depth interviews have been conducted at the executive level with the eight of the 28 international road transportation businesses serving to Europe in the hinterland of Aegean Region deployed in İzmir. The interviews were evaluated using the MaxQDA qualitative data analysis program. As a result of the evaluations, the conceptual mapping of knowledge management processes has been established for each business in the sample. The difficulties and uncertainties in the knowledge management process of international road transportation businesses have been revealed.*

**Keywords:** International Road Transportation, Knowledge Management, Value, Qualitative Data Analysis, MaxQDA.

### Özet

*Bilgiyi elde etmek, onu işleyerek kullanılabilir hale getirmek ve dönüştürerek yeni bilgiler meydana getirmek bilgi yönetiminin temel sürecini oluşturmaktadır. Toplumlar, ard arda gelen sanayi devrimleri ile üretim odağında şekillenirken; bilgi üzerinde oluşan nitel-nicel karmaşıklıklar, bilginin nasıl daha iyi işlenebileceği sorusuna yönelmeyi beraberinde getirmiştir. Otomasyon sistemleriyle desteklenen örtük bilgi-açık bilgi dönüşüm süreci ulaştırma sektöründe de kendisini göstermektedir. Özellikle havayolu ve denizyolu taşımacılığında bilgi yönetimine dayalı işletmecilik anlayışı hakimdir. Ülkemiz Avrupa'daki en büyük karayolu taşımacılığı filoları arasında olması sebebiyle pazarda önemli bir rol üstlenmektedir. Ayrıca, bu muazzam filo çoğunlukla parçalar halinde ve küçük işletmelerce sevk ve idare edildiği için sektördeki bilgi yönetimi faaliyetleri merak uyandırmaktadır. Keşifsel nitelikte olan bu çalışmada, Ege Bölgesi hinterlandında Avrupa'ya hizmet veren uluslararası karayolu taşımacılığı alanında faaliyet gösteren İzmir'de konuşlanmış 28 işletmenin 8'i ile üst düzey yönetici düzeyinde derinlemesine görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Görüşmeler MaxQDA nitel veri analizi programıyla değerlendirilmiştir. Değerlendirmeler sonucu örneklemdaki her bir işletme özelinde bilgi yönetimi süreçlerine ilişkin kavram haritalandırması oluşturulmuştur. Uluslararası karayolu taşımacılığı işletmelerinin bilgi yönetimi sürecindeki zorluk ve belirsizlikleri ortaya konmuştur.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Uluslararası Karayolu Taşımacılığı, Bilgi Yönetimi, Değer, Nitel Veri Analizi, MaxQDA.

## 1. Introduction

While Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle made the basic definition of the concept of value, they believed that value was an integral and spiritual part of the virtues of mankind, afterwards the concept of value is used in various fields, and as a result of different meanings it has been instrumental in the emergence of the Theory of Value, which is a scientific field (Kilibarda vd. 2013: 197). Value is, as it is widely understood, the social benefit obtained as a price, in terms of economic, technical and service perceived positively, and a price paid by a customer for a given product or service (Anderson ve Narus, 1991: 98). Akyildiz and Tuna (2007: 654) regarding the value of logistics understood how Turkey has made a focus group work with business managers. As a result of their research, Akyildiz and Tuna (2007: 654) identified that logistic value is delivered in a way that will increase the profitability of the desired products or the services specified in the agreement conditions in accordance with the terms of the contract, the desired point, the time, the damage and the profitability of the operation and the flexibility. if necessary. In another study, Lai et. al. (2002: 441) referred to the concepts of efficiency and effectiveness. According to Lai et. al. (2002: 441) efficiency measures how you are being used from sources (resource utility) and effectiveness is related to success of the goals (completion of goals). Moving from this, logistics value. Another point of view for the logistic value can be expressed by Porter's value chain. According to Porter (1985: 33-34), A value chain is created when activities in an enterprise are broken down into primary and supportive activities in order to understand costs, resources and possible sources of differentiation. When looking to the connection of logistics value to knowledge, Chow et al. (2007: 358) stated that an intelligent system called the knowledge-based logistics process system should be used in order to contribute to the formation of organizational knowledge by obtaining accurate and up-to-date information needed to establish logistic value. Brown (1998) argues that the amount of business applications that are formally coded in the form of business processes is just the face of the iceberg. Also, Brown (2001) stated that the vast majority of information in successful business practice is contained in the mind of the person performing the task as implicit (non-explicit) and uncoded. A business's effort to obtain accurate and up-to-date knowledge to create logistics value requires that the product and/or product-related service (such as producing, storing, transferring, transporting and recording accounting records) (Chow et al. (2007: 358). The resources utilized to reach and make available knowledge in the logistics sector can be used more effectively through strategic partnerships as a means of international structuring of the industry (Lado vd. 1997: 120; Luo, 2007: 143). In a study conducted by Rutner and Langley, (2000: 77) have been reached on the benefits of communication, time and location based on logistic value. In acquiring knowledge to the business, In order to reduce the unknowns, it is necessary to transform the implicit knowledge which is known but difficult to transfer in order to share the knowledge possessed in the enterprise with the known ones in a way that will be a common culture (De Long, 1997: 6).

In summary, in the realization of logistics activities for value creation, the practices of co-opetition (Rademakers and McKnight, 1998: 203; Bengtsson and Kock, 2000: 411; M'Chirgui, 2005: 455; Bonel and Rocco, 2007: 70; Mariani, 2007: 97; Okura, 2007: 53; Lawson et. al. 2008: 11; Ritala, et. al. 2014: 236; Hong and Snell, 2015: 769), activity of focal firm/virtual firm (Chen, (1996: 104-127), relational embeddedness that expresses the interdependence between the changing and merging of resources, ie social relations (Andersson, et. al. 2005: 4), structurel embeddedness which is a well-established structural position within a network (Gnyawali and Madhavan, 2001: 443) and social network which is a knot between people and organizations connected by a certain type of social relationship (Laumann, Galaskewicz, ve Marsden, 1978: 458) are approaches that are effective in the quick and accurate sharing of knowledge in businesses and that are influential in this study.

## 2. Methodology

In this study, semi-structured interviews have been conducted with the senior managers. The face-to-face interviews have been provided the exploration of the participants' businesses in terms of knowledge management and logistics value. The sample of the study consists of the employees of the İzmir-based and self-owned fleet companies operating at international level in the area of road transportation. The enterprises in the sample are the enterprises in the international transport and warehousing profession group which is in the NACE Code (Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community) according to the member list of İzmir Chamber of Commerce (İZTO) (Table. 1).

Occupancy Group Code	NACE Code	NACE Activity Fields
International Transportation and Warehouse (Group Code: 44)	49.41.03	International freight transport by road (food, liquid, dry cargo, etc.) (excluding gas and petroleum products)
	49.41.10	International freight transport by road (gas and petroleum products, chemical products, etc.)

**Table 1:** NACE Profession Group Codes of the Research Sample (GİB, 2015).

28 businesses which centered in and operated from İzmir were identified as the sample of the research. The number of the business has been confirmed by comparing with the İzmir member list of the Turkey International Transporters' Association (UND-Uluslar arası Nakliyeciler Derneği) and the İzmir list of the International Road and Freight Forwarders and Agencies' Association (UKAT-Uluslar arası Karayolu ile Yük Taşımacıları ve Acenta Sahipleri Derneği). 8 managers from the 7 of these 28 businesses were able to meet. The interviews generally lasted between 50 and 60 minutes based on the availability of the participants. Each interview started with an open question in general related to sector ("What do you say about the status of Turkish International road transportation sector?) in order to take some positive or negative foresight about the sector situation and provide an pure introduction for interview. Also, the taken answers for this open ended question have showed that this open-ended question paves the way for other 4 semi-structured interview questions. Also, an explanatory statement was prepared for the fourth question. However, this statement was not used in interviews for any participants (Table. 2).

Research Questions	
<b>Q0:</b>	What do you say about the status of Turkish International road transportation sector?
<b>Q1:</b>	How is the required knowledge for the international market obtained and used? (How is it possible to zoom in? → This is a explanatory statement for the fourth question; but it is not used for any participants).
<b>Q2:</b>	How do international road transport businesses obtain knowledge that will create logistical value?
<b>Q3:</b>	How do international road transport businesses obtain market-specific knowledge in providing logistical value?
<b>Q4:</b>	How do international road transport businesses carry out firm-specific knowledge in creating and maintaining logistical value?

**Table 2:** Research questions used in the interviews.

As seen on the Table 2, The topics of the questioning were focused on knowledge and logistics value based challenges and strategies for solving these related challenges, and the skills and abilities required for international road transportation businesses. Also, the interviews were audio-recorded with the approval of the participants. During the audio-recordings of the interviews, additional notes were also taken in order to it might be important. Additional notes were checked with the tape recording for accuracy and the recordings were transcribed word by word immediately after each interview not to miss any important points. Each of the 8 interviews records were transcribed was subjected to analysis using MaxQDA qualitative data analysis software. This software requires the researcher to read each text and determine which expressions mean for a code (a single statement may be coded for multiple categories) and (called retrieved segments) can then be attained by the program (Kronenwetter, et. al. 2005: 101). Also, a similar way to the study of Barati, et. al., (2016: 2460) in transferring codes in this study has been followed.

### 3. Participants

Interviews were conducted with 8 participants who are 4 of them have bachelor degree, 2 of them have master graduated and 1 of them is doctoral student and 1 of them is master student. 5 of the participant managers are women and 3 of them are men. Nine of them has experienced at least 12 years; but one participant has 4 years experienced in the road transportation sector. Also, the businesses represented by each participant are the enterprises that can contribute towards working as the enterprises that catch different points in the sector. For instance, a business represented by one of the participants provides counseling services for their costumers related to products that can be imported from Turkey and also, this business provides procurement services for their customers related to importable goods from Turkey. The differences provided by other participants' businesses which are taken part in the study shed light on the exploratory side of the study.

### 4. Results

As mentioned before, 8 subjects were interviewed during the study. Two main themes, four sub-themes (Table 3) and 35 factors of sub-themes in relation to the knowledge of the market-specific and firm-specific skills and capabilities required by international road transportation businesses were identified (Table 4 and Table 5) from interviews. But as seen in the Table 4 and Table 5, five factors of sub-themes coded as #F1#, #F2#, #F3#, #F4# and #F5# were used in each two main themes. So that, 30 of them are different from each other, Though totally 35 themes.

First Main Theme	Sub-Themes	Second Main Theme
<b>#M1#</b> Acquiring & Creating Market-Specific Knowledge	<b>#S1#</b> In Business And Out Of Business Communication	<b>#M2#</b> Creating & Protecting Firm-Specific Knowledge
	<b>#S2#</b> Collaborative Networks	
	<b>#S3#</b> Co-opetition	
	<b>#S4#</b> Computing Link	

**Table. 3:** Main themes and sub-themes outlined in relation to knowledge required by international road transportation businesses

Main Themes	Factors of Sub-Themes
<b>#M1#</b> Acquiring & Creating Market-Specific Knowledge	<b>#F1#</b> Customer demands
	<b>#F2#</b> Competitor strategies and behaviors
	<b>#F3#</b> Direct connection with customer
	<b>#F4#</b> Spot market activities
	<b>#F5#</b> Subcontracting service activities
	<b>#F6#</b> Monitoring of stakeholder activities (other modes of transport and auxiliary activities)
	<b>#F7#</b> Placement of different activities (stakeholder activities)
	<b>#F8#</b> Amount by numerically and volumetric of transportation activities
	<b>#F9#</b> Seasonal movements related to the activity area
	<b>#F10#</b> Government incentives and reports on foreign trade data
	<b>#F11#</b> Reports on transport services and ancillary services
	<b>#F12#</b> Presence of foreign offices and agents
	<b>#F13#</b> Providing customer-specific services
	<b>#F14#</b> Use of soft networks (work and after-hours conversations)
	<b>#F15#</b> Use of hard networks (telephone, fax, e-mail, local and public network portals, package programs, special software and support systems etc.)
	<b>#F16#</b> Internal competition (intra-business teams, inter-unit)
	<b>#F17#</b> Customer portfolio of current employees
<b>#F18#</b> Building of customer confidence	
<b>#F19#</b> Establishment of collaborative relationships	
<b>#F20#</b> Establishment of trust in collaborative relationships	
<b>#F21#</b> Number of collaborative links	
<b>#F22#</b> Occurrence frequency of cooperative links	

**Table 4:** Main themes and factors of sub-themes outlined in relation to the knowledge of market-specific skills and capabilities required by international road transportation businesses

As seen on the Table 4, 17 factors of sub-themes between the codes of #F6# and #F22# are different from the ones on the Table 5. Also, on the Table 5, 8 factors of sub-themes between the codes of #F23# and #F30# are different from the ones on the Table 4. But, there are also hierarchical links between these different factors of sub-themes in the main themes seen on the Table 4 and Table 5.

Main Themes	Factors of Sub-Themes
<b>#M2#</b> Creating & Protecting Firm-Specific Knowledge	<b>#F1#</b> Customer demands
	<b>#F2#</b> Competitor strategies and behaviors
	<b>#F3#</b> Direct connection with customer
	<b>#F4#</b> Spot market activities
	<b>#F5#</b> Subcontracting service activities
	<b>#F23#</b> A common language, a common idea that fits the internal and external conditions in the activities
	<b>#F24#</b> Sector, customer and period based activity records
	<b>#F25#</b> Personnel training and labour performance follow-up
	<b>#F26#</b> Electronic recording and control of activities
	<b>#F27#</b> Continuity in activities, long term relationships
	<b>#F28#</b> Sharing experience and observations regularly
	<b>#F29#</b> Support of semi-automation or full automation software for controlling activities
	<b>#F30#</b> A local network application where activity experiences are shared

**Table 5:** Main themes and factors of sub-themes outlined in relation to the firm-specific skills and capabilities required by international road transportation businesses



#### 4.1. Main Themes: The Knowledge Of Market-Specific Skills And Capabilities

Table 4 shows the skills and capabilities required by international road transportation businesses in the context of the market-specific knowledge. Also, participants in the study are coded as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8.

##### 4.1.1. In Business And Out Of Business Communication

“Customer demands” which as coded #F1#, “Competitor strategies and behaviors” as coded #F2#, “Direct connection with customer” as coded #F3#, “Spot market Activities” as coded #F4#, “Subcontracting service Activities” as coded #F5# were found to be a recurring factor of sub-themes both in the main theme #M1# (market-specific knowledge theme) and the main theme #M2# (firm-specific knowledge theme). If we look at the one of the factor of sub-themes, for instance, (P1-Marketing manager): “*Customer demands help to effectively use the market position*”, (P2-Business development manager): “*Customer requests are the most important means to gain market knowledge*”, (P3-General coordinator): “*You need to be in constant contact with the customer to get information about the market*” are some of the expressions for factor of sub-theme coded as #F1# (Customer demands) includes the #S1# (In Business And Out Of Business Communication) as coded sub-theme.

##### 4.1.2. Collaborative Networks

Answers of participants created “Establishment of collaborative relationships” as coded #F19#. For instance, the answers that make up this factor (#F19#) are (P4- Business development manager): “*For our business activities, we obtain market knowledge indirectly through the links provided by being the biggest solution partner of the world’s famous freight forwarder chain in Anatolia and a subcontractor of another important transportation company in Turkey*”, (P1-Marketing Manager): “*Offices abroad allow the market to be tracked as away from rumors*”, (P2-General coordinator): “*Epecially new lines opened by sector-leading businesses and partnerships are necessary to see the movements in the market*” are some of the expressions for factor of sub-theme coded as #F19# (Establishment of collaborative relationships) and includes the #S2# (Collaborative Networks) as coded sub-theme.

##### 4.1.3. Co-opetition

As it seen, the formation of the co-opetition’s sub-theme which coded as (#S3#) are as some of the following expressions of the participants, (P8-General coordinator): “*Domestic and foreign business partnerships act as catalysts in achieving awareness and reaching market knowledge*”, (P1-Marketing Manager): “*In addition, although businesses are represented by their own offices in the respective territories, it is essential for market information to have reliable intermediaries*”, (P2-Operation Manager): “*Annual transport contracts provide in-depth insight into the relevant customer, sector and line*” These are related to the factors of sub-theme which coded as #F20# and #F21# which in the #S3# (Co-opetition) as coded sub-theme.

##### 4.1.4. Computing Link

#F15# is related to the sub-theme which coded as #S4# (Computing link). Participants’ expressions (factors of sub-themes) are indirectly effective in the formation of this sub-theme. The statements of the participants shows that this factor occurs indirectly. “*requirement of erp and etc. integrated systems which provides connection with customers, collaborators and stakeholders and market tracing*” is related to #F15#.

## 4.2. Main Themes: The Knowledge Of Firm-Specific Skills And Capabilities

Table 5 shows the skills and capabilities required by international road transportation businesses in the context of the firm-specific knowledge.

### 4.2.1. In Business And Out Of Business Communication

Factors of sub-themes which coded as #F1#, #F2#, #F3#, #F4# and #F5# are the common codes. If we look at the one of the factor of sub-themes, for instance, (P1-Marketing manager): *“Changes in imports and exports in seasonal transitions need to be interpreted in an enterprise-specific manner. Changes in the economy and the changes that are the effects of the economy must be interpreted in similar previous periods”* is related to the #F4# and #F24#. (P3-Business development manager): *“Preliminary information related to the communication with the customer (customer summary) which can provide a simple information about the past and the current situation ensure that employees agree on the customer”* is related to #F3#, #F24# and #F28#.

### 4.2.2. Collaborative Networks

As it seen, the formation of the sub-theme of the collaborative networks which coded as (#S2#) are as some of the following expressions of the participants, (P5- General Coordinator): *“The presence of trusted intermediaries and business partners abroad is another important element in creating logistical value. Responsibility among employees should be appropriately distributed”* is related to #F27# and #F28#.

### 4.2.3. Co-opetition

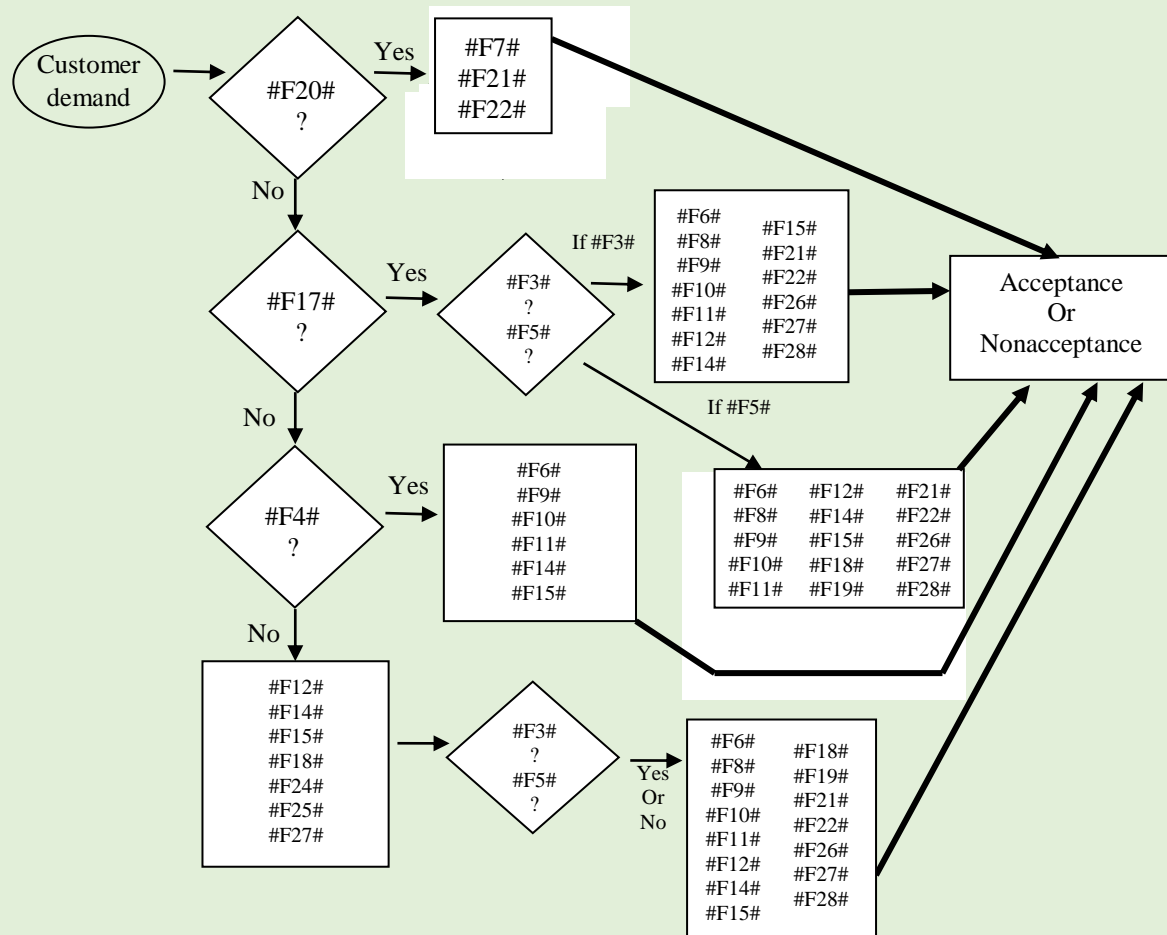
As it seen, the formation of the co-opetition's sub-theme which coded as (#S3#) are as some of the following expressions of the participants, (P4- Business development manager): *“...knowledge from brokers, business partners and customers...”*, (P5-General Coordinator): *“The presence of trusted intermediaries and business partners abroad”*, (P8-General coordinator): *“...working with trustable and well-known business partners and intermediaries abroad”* are related to the foactors of sub-themes which coded as #F27# and #F28#.

### 4.2.4. Computing Link

Factors of sub-theme which coded as #F26#, #F29# and #F30# are related to the sub-theme which coded as #S4# (Computing link). The formation of the sub-theme of computing link are as some of the following expressions of the participants, (P1-Marketing manager): *“The software used should be updated according to the change requirements and obligations of the activities”*, (4-Business development manager): *“Departments should be able to access information related to self department about the same activity through a common interface”*.

### 5. Discussion

This study reveals the value related to knowledge channels in the context of being provided the logistics value in the perspective of the international road transportation businesses. As a result of the evaluations of the interviews and all the related coding process, the conceptual mapping of knowledge management processes has been established for the initial sector adhering to the businesses in the sample. As it seen in Figure 1, the codings generated on the basis of the interviews provided a map of knowledge management process related to the sample businesses. The relevant knowledge management process is exemplified by the customer's freight demand. First question is the “Is there any connection to the customer before?”. This situation has been associated with #F20#. If it is “no”, then another coding questioning is asked “Is it belongs to current portfolio?” associated with #F17#.



**Figure 1:** The Conceptual Mapping Of Knowledge Management Processes

If it is “no”, then the third main questioning in coding is “Is it spot market activities?” associated with #F4#. After these main three questions, other coded queries related to knowledge generation process are similar as it seen in figure 1. As a result of all these process, it seen that, spot customer evaluation that is not a current customer and the evaluation of sub-contractor requests from existing customers is an knowledge-intensive process.



## 6. Conclusion

This study shows that although international road transport businesses prefer regular transportation activities, they also depend on the spot market. Because the spot market often provides new and needed knowledge for them. Most of the businesses in the sample prefer spot market activities primarily for the regions and customers they will operate for the first time. This situation is expressed by the comments of participant in the interview as follows, the participant P1 said that “*The spot market helps the market to learn the odor and market pulse*” and the participant P3 said that “*The movements in the spot market activities provides fresh blood to the business*”. In addition, the study has shown that the integration of information technologies and knowledge management practices under the management information systems framework will enable knowledge to exist as a structure that lives in the management and administration of business activities.

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