

## Strategy to Enhance Competitive Advantage Through Culture Analysis and Customer Behaviors on the Iron Clan Jewelry Brand

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze strategies to increase competitive advantage through cultural analysis and customer behavior in the Iron Clan Jewelry brand. The jewelry industry in Indonesia showed significant growth, with an export value of USD 547.5 million in December 2023. However, jewelry companies face challenges in understanding increasingly complex and dynamic consumer preferences. This study uses a quantitative approach with the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method to analyze the relationship between variables. Data were collected through a survey of 384 respondents who are consumers or potential consumers of Iron Clan Jewelry in the Greater Bandung area. The research results indicate that cultural analysis and customer behavior significantly influence competitive advantage, with product innovation serving as a key mediator in this relationship. Furthermore, regulation moderates these dynamics, shaping the extent to which cultural insights and consumer feedback can be effectively translated into market advantages. The findings suggest that a deep understanding of cultural values and consumer behavior patterns enables companies to design more relevant and differentiated products, thereby strengthening their competitive position. This study provides strategic recommendations for jewelry brands to leverage cultural insights and adaptive innovation processes while aligning with regulatory frameworks to achieve sustainable growth in a competitive market.

**Keywords:** culture analysis, customer behaviors, product innovation, competitive advantage, regulation

### INTRODUCTION

The jewelry industry continues to show significant growth globally, influenced by increasing consumer purchasing power, lifestyle diversification, and the need for products that reflect individual identities. The global jewelry market is projected to grow from USD 224.39 billion in 2023 to USD 343.90 billion by 2032, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.99% (Fortune Business Insights, 2024). This growth is driven by rising consumer purchasing power, increasing interest in product personalization, and demand for products that are not only visually beautiful, but also have symbolic meaning and sustainability (J. Ottman, 2017; J. A. Ottman et al., 2006; Worakittikul et al., 2024).

In this context, Iron Clan Jewelry as a brand from Indonesia comes with a culture-based handmade product approach (Brudie, 2019; Guides, 2016). The brand blends ethnic values, spirituality, and dark-art styles through jewelry handcrafted by local artisans. The company's strategies to increase competitive advantage include: Culture-based design innovation: designing collections based on global mythology and spiritual symbolism. Limited handmade collection segmentation: creating scarcity and exclusivity value. Strengthening brand storytelling through social media and official websites to build emotional closeness with consumers. Personalization of products on demand: tailoring the design to the consumer's emotional preferences such as zodiac symbols, totems, or personal spiritual meanings (Du, 2024; Patanjali, 2025; Zhang et al., 2025).

Iron Clan Jewelry's target market consists of consumers aged 21–45 years, the majority of whom are jewelry collectors, art lovers, and followers of gothic, spiritual, and bohemian subcultures, with spread in Indonesia, the United States, Europe, Australia and East Asia. These consumers value the emotional and symbolic aspects of their purchasing decisions, including the cultural value, spirituality, authenticity, and exclusivity of the product. They tend to be resistant to mass products, and instead look for products with narrative value and personal engagement.

The jewelry industry in Indonesia shows significant growth potential, driven by increasing people's purchasing power, diversifying lifestyles, and consumer demand for products that reflect their identity (Melati & Kusumawardhani, 2025; Perret et al., 2025; Suyanto et al., 2019). The ever-growing domestic market opens up huge opportunities for jewelry manufacturers to serve a wide range of consumer segments, from traditional designs to modern innovations. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS, 2024), the value of Indonesia's jewelry exports increased from USD1.47 billion in 2020 to USD2.86 billion in 2021 (a growth of 76.05%) and reached USD3.67 billion in 2022. Projections for 2023 show an increase of up to USD4.35 billion, with export volumes increasing from 615 tons in 2020 to 816.4 tons in 2021 (Bisnis, 2023).

In addition, data from Statista (2024) shows significant growth in Luxury Jewelry revenue in Indonesia from 2018 to 2029, with positive trends reflecting the increasing demand for luxury jewelry products in both domestic and global markets (Figure 1.9). In December 2023, the export value of jewelry reached USD547.5 million, an increase of 67.7% *year-on-year* compared to December 2022 (Indonesia Government, 2024). This trend reflects a huge opportunity for Indonesian manufacturers to expand international markets, especially to Switzerland, the United States, Hong Kong, and the United Arab Emirates, where Indonesia has become the world's 9th largest jewelry exporter by 2023 (Good News From Indonesia, 2024).

The decision to buy jewelry in Indonesia is greatly influenced by local culture and global trends. Research by Shafi et al. (2022) highlighting that the combination of cultural elements and innovation can enhance the attractiveness of handmade products, while Surodjo et al. (2022) noted the significant contribution of the creative economy sector to Indonesia's GDP through cultural attraction. In addition, symbolism and aesthetics in the design, as demonstrated by Ji & Lin (2022), Strengthen the emotional connection of consumers with products, increase customer attraction and loyalty. Modern lifestyles and the need for social identity also encourage consumers to choose products that reflect their cultural values and status (Susanto et al., 2023). With the increasing trend of sustainability and jewelry as a status symbol, domestic jewelry industry players need to continue to innovate to maintain cultural relevance while expanding the international market (Tempo, 2024).

A competitive advantage in the jewelry industry can be built through a deep understanding of customer culture and behavior. Research by Ramadan & Wu (2021) highlighting the importance of integrating cultural elements in product design to enhance cultural value in global competition. For example, the use of cultural symbols, such as traditional motifs or historical elements, can provide strong emotional value and create a deep connection with consumers. In addition, research by Lou et al. (2022) shows that the emotional, social, and quality value of products play a crucial role in driving consumer purchase intent, especially in the luxury goods market. By understanding how consumers value these elements, companies can strengthen relationships with customers, increase brand loyalty, and create unique products in a competitive market.

In addition to design, culture-based marketing strategies play a crucial role in creating a competitive advantage. Research by Ning & Li (2024) reveals that brand narratives that integrate cultural elements can help build a strong and relevant brand image. This is reinforced

by the findings Brandão et al. (2021) which shows how brand narratives can provide added value through emotional connections with consumers, particularly in the context of designer jewelry. On the other hand, research by Suwandana (2023) emphasizing that competitive advantage can mediate the influence of market orientation on marketing performance, as seen in the gold and silver craft sector. The combination of culture-based design, strong brand narratives, and consumer-perceived emotional value allows jewelry companies to maintain sustainable competitiveness in an increasingly dynamic market.

Cultural analysis has an important role to play in marketing strategy, especially in understanding the values, norms, and beliefs that influence customer buying behavior. Culture directly influences consumer preferences for products, including the symbolism inherent in design, color, or function. Research by Ji & Lin (2022) Demonstrating that cultural symbolism applied in product design can create a deep emotional connection between brands and consumers, increasing customer loyalty. In addition, research by Nalbant & Aydin (2023) highlighting how cultural narrative-based marketing strategies, both traditionally and digitally, can strengthen brand relationships with customers, creating greater appeal in the global market.

In addition to understanding the local culture, adapting marketing strategies for international markets has become increasingly important in the era of globalization. Research by Jadil et al. (2022) It shows that cultural values and social norms have a significant role in building consumer trust, especially in emerging markets. Using cultural symbols in promotion or aligning brand values with local social norms can increase brand relevance and appeal. However, failure to understand cultural differences, especially in global digital platforms, can be detrimental to brand reputation (Dwivedi et al., 2023). By combining local and international cultural analysis, companies can increase market acceptance, strengthen brand image, and create a sustainable competitive advantage.

A deep understanding of customer behavior is key to creating sustainable competitiveness in the jewelry industry. Companies that understand consumers' motivations in choosing products can design a more personalized and relevant customer experience. Research by Lou et al. (2022) Showing that the emotional, symbolic, and social value of a product plays an important role in influencing consumer purchase intent, especially in the luxury goods market. Strategies such as personalizing jewelry designs based on customers' unique preferences not only increase satisfaction but also strengthen an emotional connection with the brand, creating ongoing customer loyalty. With this approach, customers not only make repeat purchases but also become active promoters for the brand.

*Data-driven marketing* is an important tool for understanding customer preferences, purchasing patterns, and expectations. Research by Ajiga et al. (2024) and Amajuoyi et al. (2024) highlighting that the use of predictive analytics and artificial intelligence (AI)-based technologies allows companies to identify customer needs in *real-time*. This technology also helps companies predict churn risk and increase customer loyalty through more personalized service. In addition, the adoption of Industry 4.0 technology provides high flexibility in meeting the unique needs of customers (Pech & Vrchota, 2022; Pereira et al., 2022). By leveraging advanced data-driven insights and personalization, companies can create more effective marketing strategies and build a sustainable competitive advantage in a dynamic market.

This research is important because the jewelry industry in Indonesia is experiencing rapid growth, with an export value of USD547.5 million in December 2023, an increase of 67.7% year-on-year compared to December 2022 (Indonesia Government, 2024). However, behind this growth, there are challenges in the form of changing consumer preferences towards environmentally friendly products. The survey shows that 96.7% of Millennial and Gen Z consumers in Indonesia prefer environmentally friendly products over conventional products (Tirto, 2022). A similar trend is found globally, where 74% of consumers are willing to change

their purchasing preferences based on the environmental impact of the product (GoodStats, 2024). This data emphasizes the importance of a deep understanding of consumer culture and behavior to ensure a company's strategy remains relevant and competitive (Farzin et al., 2023; Kamkankaew et al., 2023). Without systematic research, jewelry companies like Iron Clan Jewelry risk missing out on opportunities to respond effectively to market needs.

Specifically, this study analyzes how elements of consumer culture and behavior can be strategically integrated into product design, marketing, and customer experience to create a competitive advantage. In addition, the study evaluates how cultural preferences and symbolism influence customer purchasing decisions, as well as how data-driven personalization approaches play a role in increasing customer loyalty. Through this approach, the research is expected to produce a strategic framework that can be implemented by Iron Clan Jewelry to optimize its business strategy.

Furthermore, regulation plays a role as a moderating factor that guides the direction of innovation. Regulations on sustainability, eco-friendly raw materials, and global trade ethics require companies to innovate responsibly. For example, the export regulations of precious metal jewelry in some countries demand supply chain transparency and fair trade certification. In this context, Iron Clan must balance cultural expression with regulatory compliance to remain relevant in the international market. Hermundsdottir and Aspelund (2021) state that adaptive regulation can act as a catalyst for strategic innovation that strengthens a company's competitive position in the global market.

Thus, a deep understanding of cultural analysis and customer behavior—along with innovation as a bridge and regulation as a guiding force—is essential in designing strategies that can sustainably enhance Iron Clan Jewelry's competitive advantage. In addition, this research focuses on strengthening brand relevance, expanding market share, and increasing customer loyalty through the optimization of consumer culture and behavior elements. With this approach, the benefits of the research are not only experienced by the company being studied but also make a significant contribution to the jewelry industry as a whole.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### *Types of Research*

This study uses a quantitative design with a descriptive, correlational, and causal approach. This approach was chosen to analyze the relationships between the various variables in the developed model. This quantitative research involves collecting data through surveys with questionnaires distributed to respondents who meet predetermined criteria. The collected data was analyzed using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling technique with SmartPLS software.

### *Variable Operations*

Variable operationalization is the process of defining abstract concepts in research into variables that can be measured concretely and objectively. The variables in this study are defined through relevant dimensions and measured with predetermined indicators.

**Table 1. Dimensions and Indicators of Culture Analysis**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
The Meaning of Culture	Jewelry as a symbol of social status
Cultural Commodities	The design reflects cultural heritage

Dimension	Indicators
Consumer Identity	Jewelry confirms personal identity
Market Resistance	Eco-friendly product preferences
Material Culture	Jewelry as part of everyday life

### *Population and Sample*

The population is consumers or potential consumers who are actively interested in or involved in Iron Clan Jewelry jewelry in the Greater Bandung area. The sampling method uses non-probability purposive sampling. The minimum sample number was calculated using the Lemeshow formula with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%, resulting in a sample size of at least 384 respondents.

### *Data collection techniques*

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale format. The questionnaire consists of 21 questions representing the various dimensions and indicators of each variable. The questionnaire was distributed online using the Google Forms platform with a data collection period of two months.

### *Data Analysis Techniques*

The data analysis technique used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling. This approach was chosen because of the flexibility in analyzing research models with latent variables and complex indicators, and does not require normal data distribution assumptions. The analysis stage includes measurement model evaluation, structural model evaluation, and hypothesis testing through bootstrapping with 5,000 samples.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Hypothesis Test

#### a. Direct Effect Hypothesis

Based on the results of the path analysis, all direct relationships in the research model were proven to be positive and significant. **Culture Analysis (CU)** had a positive effect on **Product Innovation (IP)** ( $\beta = 0.530$ ;  $t = 16.662$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and on **Competitive Advantage (CA)** ( $\beta = 0.168$ ;  $t = 4.400$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). **Customer Behaviors (CB)** also had a positive effect on **Product Innovation** ( $\beta = 0.572$ ;  $t = 19.150$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and on **Competitive Advantage** ( $\beta = 0.232$ ;  $t = 6.079$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). In addition, **Product Innovation** has been shown to have a positive and significant effect on **Competitive Advantage** ( $\beta = 0.575$ ;  $t = 13.288$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). These results show that increased understanding of consumer culture and customer behavior is able to drive product innovation, which ultimately contributes to strengthening the company's competitive advantage.

#### b. Indirect Effect Hypothesis

Based on the results of the mediation analysis, **Culture Analysis (CU)** was proven to have a positive and significant effect on **Competitive Advantage (CA)** through **Product Innovation (IP)** with an **indirect effect value of 0.304** ( $t = 10.435$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), which shows that increasing culture analysis can increase competitive advantage through strengthening product innovation. In addition, **Customer Behaviors (CB)** has also been proven to have a positive and significant effect on **Competitive Advantage** through **Product Innovation** with an **indirect effect value of 0.329** ( $t = 10.934$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). These results confirm that product

innovation plays a **strong role as a mediator** in channeling the influence of culture analysis and customer behaviors on competitive advantage in research models.

### c. Moderating Effect Hypothesis

Based on the results of the moderation analysis, **Regulation (RE)** was shown to moderate the relationship between **Culture Analysis (CU)** and **Competitive Advantage (CA)** positively and significantly ( $\beta = 0.127$ ;  $t = 2.981$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), which shows that regulation strengthens the influence of culture analysis on competitive advantage. In contrast, regulation has not been shown to moderate the relationship between **Product Innovation (IP)** and **Competitive Advantage** ( $\beta = 0.067$ ;  $t = 1.283$ ), so the hypothesis is not statistically supported. In addition, regulation also moderated the relationship between **Customer Behaviors (CB)** and **Competitive Advantage** positively and significantly ( $\beta = 0.095$ ;  $t = 2.358$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), although the moderation power was relatively weak. These findings show that regulation plays a reinforcing factor in several relationships in the research model, especially in the path of culture analysis and customer behaviors to competitive advantage.

### d. Total Effect

Total effect shows the amount of overall influence between constructs which is a combination of direct and indirect influences. The results of the analysis show that Customer Behaviors (CB), Culture Analysis (CU), and Product Innovation (IP) have a positive and significant total influence on the model. CB has a strong effect on Competitive Advantage (CA) (0.561) and Product Innovation (IP) (0.572), while CU also has a strong effect on CA (0.473) and IP (0.530). In addition, IP has the strongest total influence on CA (0.575), making it a major factor in increasing competitive advantage. In contrast, Regulation (RE) had no significant effect directly on CA (0.058). In the moderation role, RE was shown to strengthen the relationship between  $CU \rightarrow CA$  (0.127; moderate moderation) and  $CB \rightarrow CA$  (0.095; weak moderation), but did not moderate the relationship between  $IP \rightarrow CA$  (0.067; insignificant). Overall, these results show that the main influence in the model is supported by CB, CU, and especially IP, while the regulatory role is more selective through moderation mechanisms.

## Discussion of Research Results

### 1. The Influence of Culture Analysis on Product Innovation

The results of the structural model show that **Culture Analysis (CU)** has a positive and significant effect on **Product Innovation (IP)** with a path coefficient of 0.530 ( $t = 16.662$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). These findings are in line with **Consumer Culture Theory** which states that consumption is influenced by cultural meanings, symbols, and norms, so that the organization's ability to understand the context of consumer culture can improve the quality of product innovation that is more functionally and emotionally relevant (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Schmitt et al., 2022). In addition, the literature also confirms that understanding market dynamics and consumer preferences is able to strengthen the process of converting market insights into valuable and adaptive product updates (Medeiros & Maçada, 2022; Shi et al., 2023; Gao et al., 2024). Thus, product innovation is not only driven by technological factors, but also by the organization's ability to interpret the dynamics of consumer culture as the basis for competitive product development.

### 2. The Influence of Culture Analysis on Competitive Advantage

The results of the structural model test showed that Culture Analysis (CU) had a positive and significant effect on Competitive Advantage (CA) with a path coefficient of 0.168 ( $t = 4.400$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). These findings show that the better a company understands consumer cultural values, symbols, and practices, the stronger its ability to build value differentiation and relevance that supports competitive advantage. Theoretically, this is in line with Consumer Culture Theory which states that culture shapes consumer preferences and evaluations of products (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Schmitt et al., 2022). In addition, the right cultural

insights can also strengthen market positioning and orientation so that it contributes to increased competitiveness, especially in the creative industries influenced by symbolic value and consumption experience (Rua & Santos, 2022; Gao et al., 2024; Pantano et al., 2022).

### **3. The Influence of Customer Behaviors on Product Innovation**

The results of the structural model showed that **Customer Behaviors (CB)** had a positive and significant effect on **Product Innovation (IP)** with a path coefficient of 0.572 ( $t = 19.150$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), which showed a strong relationship in the research model. These findings confirm that customer behavior is an important source of information in driving product innovation, because consumer preferences, experiences, and perceptions can be translated by companies into updates on product design, features, and value (Rua & Santos, 2022; Sheth, 2021). In addition, an understanding of customer behavior allows companies to tailor products to the functional and emotional needs of consumers, thereby increasing market relevance and quality of innovation (Clauss et al., 2021; Ferreira et al., 2021; Gao et al., 2024). Thus, product innovation will be more effective when companies are able to utilize customer behavior insights as the basis for developing products that are adaptive and valuable to the market.

### **4. The Influence of Customer Behaviors on Competitive Advantage**

Customer Behaviors (CB) showed a positive and significant influence on Competitive Advantage (CA) with a path coefficient of 0.232 ( $t = 6.079$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating a moderate-strength relationship. These findings indicate that increased understanding of consumer preferences, social influences, purchasing patterns, and product knowledge can strengthen company reputation, brand image, quality perception, and customer satisfaction. Theoretically, customer behavior is the result of a rational and emotional evaluation of product value that is influenced by psychological, social, and cultural factors, so that a good understanding of these dynamics allows companies to optimize branding, positioning, and customer experience strategies to create differentiation that supports competitive advantage (Rua & Santos, 2022; Sheth, 2021; Pantano et al., 2022).

### **5. The Influence of Product Innovation on Competitive Advantage**

The results of the structural model test showed that Product Innovation (IP) had a positive and significant effect on Competitive Advantage (CA) with a path coefficient of 0.575 ( $t = 13.288$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating a strong and stable relationship. These findings confirm that increased product innovation can strengthen competitive advantage through value creation and differentiation that is relevant to the market and difficult for competitors to replicate (Andersén, 2021; Clauss et al., 2021). In the perspective of dynamic capabilities, innovation is also an organizational mechanism to improve performance and competitive position through product updates, design, and customer experience (Ferreira et al., 2021; Tu & Wu, 2021; Shi et al., 2023).

### **6. The Influence of Culture Analysis on Competitive Advantage through Product Innovation**

The results of the mediation test showed that **Culture Analysis** had a positive and significant effect on **Competitive Advantage** through **Product Innovation**, with an indirect effect of 0.304 ( $t = 10.435$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). These findings show that product innovation acts as a mechanism that translates consumers' understanding of values and cultural symbols into market-relevant product updates. Theoretically, this is in line with **Consumer Culture Theory** which views culture as a source of innovation ideas that can strengthen the differentiation and competitive position of companies (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Andersén, 2021; Clauss et al., 2021).

### **7. The Influence of Customer Behaviors on Competitive Advantage through Product Innovation**

The results of the indirect effect test showed that Customer Behaviors had a positive and significant effect on Competitive Advantage through Product Innovation, with an indirect

effect value of 0.329 ( $t = 10.934$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). These findings show that the influence of customer behavior on competitive advantage primarily occurs through product innovation that translates consumer preference and experience insights into relevant and valuable product updates. Thus, product innovation plays a role as an important mechanism that converts understanding of customer behavior into differentiation and value that strengthens a company's competitive advantage (Rua & Santos, 2022; Andersén, 2021; Clauss et al., 2021).

### **8. The Influence of Culture Analysis on Competitive Advantage Moderated by Regulation**

The results of the moderation test showed that **the regulation** strengthened the relationship between **culture analysis** and **competitive advantage** with a moderation coefficient of 0.127 ( $t = 2.981$ ;  $p = 0.003$ ). These findings show that the stronger the demands for compliance and regulatory standards, the more effective the understanding of consumer culture is in generating differentiation and increased competitiveness. Theoretically, **Consumer Culture Theory** explains that culture shapes consumer preferences and meanings, so culture analysis helps companies design more relevant product and brand strategies (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Schmitt et al., 2022). In this context, regulation acts as an institutional reinforcer that increases market legitimacy and consumer confidence, thereby magnifying the contribution of culture analysis to a company's competitive advantage (Hermundsdottir & Aspelund, 2021).

### **9. The Influence of Product Innovation on Competitive Advantage Moderated by Regulation**

Moderation testing showed that regulation did not moderate the relationship between product innovation and competitive advantage, as the interaction effect was not significant at the level of 5 percent ( $\beta = 0.067$ ;  $t = 1.283$ ). These findings show that the influence of product innovation on competitive advantage tends to be stable and is more influenced by the company's internal capabilities, such as resource management, organizational learning, and product differentiation strategies (Andersén, 2021; Ferreira et al., 2021). In the perspective of resource-based view and dynamic capabilities, product innovation is a key value creation mechanism that allows companies to achieve a competitive advantage without relying on variations in regulatory pressures (Clauss et al., 2021).

### **10. The Influence of Customer Behaviors on Competitive Advantage Moderated by Regulation**

The results of the moderation test showed that **the regulation moderated the relationship between customer behaviors and competitive advantage significantly** ( $\beta = 0.095$ ;  $t = 2.358$ ;  $p = 0.018$ ), although the strength of the effect was relatively weak. The positive coefficient indicates that the stronger the regulation, the greater the influence of customer behavior on competitive advantage. Theoretically, customer behavior reflects preferences, social norms, and consumption patterns that influence the evaluation of product value (Rua & Santos, 2022; Sheth, 2021). In this context, regulation acts as an institutional reinforcer that increases consumer legitimacy, credibility, and trust through compliance and quality standards, so that companies' understanding of customer behavior can be more effective in generating a competitive advantage (Hermundsdottir & Aspelund, 2021).

## **CONCLUSION**

This study is designed to analyze strategies to increase competitive advantage through cultural analysis and customer behavior in Iron Clan Jewelry. Based on the developed theoretical framework, this study identifies the complex relationship among consumer culture analysis, customer behavior, product innovation, and regulation in creating a competitive advantage. A deep understanding of consumer cultural values, norms, and preferences helps companies design differentiation strategies that are functionally, symbolically, and emotionally relevant. This research is expected to make a significant contribution to both the theoretical

and practical understanding of how cultural analysis and customer behavior interact to build competitive advantage in the jewelry industry.

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