

# Price, Taste, and Convenience: A Comparative Study on School-Based and Commercial Pastil Vendors

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**Abstract**—Pastil is a staple and popular food at Mindanao State University-General Santos City (MSU-GSC), especially among students. It specifically compares how Price, Taste, and Convenience influence their decision when choosing between vendors located inside the school and commercial vendors located outside the campus. The researchers used a descriptive-comparative method and gathered quantitative data through surveys. These surveys were given to students both in-person on paper and online using Google Forms, based on a convenience sampling technique. The findings were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as averages and percentages. The results showed that convenience was the most dominant factor for students. They overwhelmingly choose school-based vendors because they are close to classrooms and dorms, which is essential for busy schedules or short breaks. Students even said they are not likely to leave campus just to buy pastil, even if they have extra time, making outside vendors mostly a "backup option". The taste was surprisingly not a major deciding factor; the results were balanced, showing students had mixed preferences between the two types. For price, students were found to be value-driven, looking for good "value for money" rather than just the lowest cost. The study concluded that students ultimately balance all three factors Price, Taste, and Convenience to find the best combination for their specific needs at that moment.

**Index Terms**—Pastil, Consumer Behavior, Student preferences, Price, Taste, Convenience, Mindanao State University – General Santos City.

## 1. Introduction

Food is a fundamental part of the student experience, influencing not only health and well-being but also daily budgets and social routines. At Mindanao State University – General Santos City (MSU-GSC), one of the most popular dishes which is pastil has become a staple, representing one of the most common and accessible meals for students. A walk across the campus reveals a vibrant micro-economy of pastil vendors, with prices ranging from as low as ten pesos to as high as twenty-five pesos. This variety, while offering choice, also presents a daily decision-making challenge for students.

This study is built on the observation that students must constantly navigate trade-offs. They must decide whether to

choose the most affordable option, which may sometimes mean smaller servings or less variety, or to spend more on what they perceive as better taste, food quality, or convenience. While pastil is a simple dish, it reflects larger concerns about how students make daily economic decisions based on their budget, perception of food quality, and accessibility. Kotler & Armstrong (2021) stated that consumer behavior models have long established that price, perceived quality (taste), and convenience are primary drivers in purchasing decisions. These given factors are particularly having an increasing level within the university setting, where some students often operate with limited budgets and significant time constraints (Smith & Jones, 2019). Based on studies of Brown (2022) that some campus related food environments, it is often highlighted that convenience can frequently override price or even health considerations for busy students. Yet, these consumer dynamics remain to be specifically explored within the unique context of MSU-GSC's pastil market, which is divided between small, often student-run (school-based) stalls and more established commercial vendors.

This research aims to fill that gap. The primary variables of interest on this study are the core factors that influence student choices: Price (the monetary cost of the pastil), Taste (the student's subjective perception of flavor and quality), and lastly, the Convenience (the ease of access, speed of service, and location of the vendor). The study will compare how these factors are valued by students when choosing between two distinct vendor categories: school-based vendors (often smaller, more informal, and potentially lower-priced, but highly convenient due to their on-campus location) and commercial vendors (which are often located outside the university, making them less convenient to some students but potentially perceived as offering higher food quality or more variety than inside the campus). Understanding these factors is significant as it provides insight into how students balance affordability with value in their everyday food choices. The findings could be valuable for student entrepreneurs, university administrators seeking to support student welfare, and campus food service providers.

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## 2. Objectives of the Study

This research will focus on three primary objectives which will be centered on Price, Taste, and Convenience. First, it will compare the different price points of *pastil* vendors within MSU-General Santos City, analyzing how price relates to student perceptions of taste and serving size. Second, it will analyze the key factors influencing consumer taste for a *pastil*. Third, it will examine how convenience, particularly vendor location and speed of service, influences student purchasing decisions. A key part of this study is to compare how students weigh the trade-offs between these three factors: price, taste, and convenience when choosing between highly accessible school-based vendors and less convenient (off-campus) commercial vendors. Ultimately, the study aims to identify which of these three variables is the most significant driver in student decision-making, providing insights to help vendors and students better understand the balance of these factors in the campus food market.

## 3. Materials and Method

### A. Research Design

This study will employ descriptive comparative research design. Descriptive comparative research design is appropriate as it aims to systematically describe the factors (Price, Taste, Convenience) that influence student choices regarding *pastil* vendors. Creswell & Creswell (2023) stated that this study is considered descriptive as it aims to mainly describe these factors, and it is comparative as it will compare the factors between two distinct groups: school-based vendors and commercial vendors. The research will mainly utilize a quantitative approach, gathering data through a structured survey to measure student perceptions and preferences.

### B. Sampling Method

The concept of Etikan (2016) that a non-probability sampling technique, specifically convenience sampling, will be used to select the participants. This method is practical for this study as it involves selecting student respondents who are readily available and willing to participate on the MSU-GSC campus. While non-probability sampling does not allow for generalization to the entire population, it is a widely accepted and practical method for exploratory studies in specific settings. The researchers will approach students in common areas such as canteens, college buildings, and near the locations of *pastil* vendors. An online link will also be disseminated, allowing for a wider reach within the university's student population.

### C. Data Gathering

The primary data gathering instrument for this study will be a researcher-made questionnaire. The instrument will be divided into two main sections. The first section will collect the Demographic Profile of the respondents (e.g., college, year level, average weekly food budget). The second section is the main survey, which is structured into four parts: Part I: Price and Affordability, containing items measuring student perceptions of *pastil* prices and its affordability; Part II: Taste

and Satisfaction, focusing on items related to perceived taste, flavor, and overall satisfaction; Part III: Convenience and Location, which will assess the importance of vendor location, speed of service, and ease of access; and Part IV: Overall Value and Decision Factors, which will include items that ask students to weigh the different factors against each other and determine their overall value perception.

The items in Parts I through IV of the main survey will mainly use a 5-point Likert scale to assess student perceptions and preferences. Likert (1932) developed this concept that Likert scale is a well-established and reliable method for measuring attitudes and perceptions by asking the respondents to rate their agreement with a series of statements. Additionally, to ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument within this research, it will be subjected to a pilot test with a small group of students who are not part of the main study. The feedback from the pilot test will be used to refine the clarity, relevance, and wording of the questionnaire items before full deployment.

### D. Data Collection Procedure

The data will be collected through two methods to ensure a comprehensive and accessible survey process:

- *On-site Survey*: Printed, paper-based copies of the questionnaire will be distributed by hand to students on the MSU-GSC campus. Researchers will be present to explain the purpose of the study and collect the completed forms immediately.
- *Online Survey*: A digital version of the questionnaire will be created using Google Forms. The link to this form will be disseminated through student social media groups, university email lists, and other online channels accessible to the MSU-GSC student body.

The collection period will last for 2 weeks or until the target number of respondents is met.

### E. Data Analysis

Upon collection, the data from the paper surveys will be manually encoded and combined with the dataset exported from Google Forms. All the data will be analyzed using statistical software (e.g., SPSS or Microsoft Excel's Data Analysis Tool pack). The study and concept of Boone & Boone, (2012) that analysis of this study will focus mainly on descriptive analysis, such as frequency counts, percentages, and means. Boone & Boone (2012) proved that it is suitable for analyzing data from Likert scales to summarize responses and identify patterns. These statistics will be used to summarize the demographic profile of the respondents and their responses to the Likert-scale items. These descriptive measures will also be used to compare the perceptions of students towards school-based and commercial vendors, highlighting differences in mean scores and response distributions for Price, Taste, and Convenience.

### F. Ethical Considerations

The researchers will strictly adhere to ethical guidelines throughout the study. A consent form will be presented as an introductory statement on both the online and paper surveys and will be provided to all participants. This statement will clearly

explain the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the assurance that all responses will be kept confidential. Participants will be required to provide their consent to proceed, which will include an agreement to "consent to the processing of my personal data in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012." Before final submission, participants will also "certify that the information I provided is true and correct." The data collected will be used solely for the academic purposes of this study.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

This section presents, analyses, and interprets the case study.

Table 1 shows respondents' responses on the price of school-based pastil, with an overall mean score of 4.43, indicating "High". The data reveals that school-based pastil offers affordable pastil (M=4.65), price affects where I decide to buy (M=4.32), it fits my daily budget (M=4.55), willing to pay more if they offer larger portions (M=4.42), paying a slightly higher price for school-based pastil is reasonable (M=4.23) shows that school-based pastil in terms of price for respondents have strongly impact. The statement "school-based pastil offers affordable pastil" shows that the school-based pastil has the highest mean price, indicating it is affordable across the school, regardless of the pastil stall. The statement "paying a slightly higher price for school-based is reasonable when it gives better perceived value" has the lowest mean for school-based pastil for price. Despite the "high" mean score, customers still pay or give a tip if the stall offers good value. Steenhuis et al. (2011) proved his study that price can be seen as 'the amount of money charged for a product, whereas value relates this price to the perceived benefits of having the product.

Table 2 shows respondents' responses regarding the price of commercial pastil, with an overall mean score of 2.91, indicating "Moderate." The data reveals that commercial pastil offers affordable pastil (M=3.00), price affects where I decide

to buy (M=3.35), it fits my daily budget (M=2.52), willing to pay more if they offer larger portions (M=2.74), paying a slightly higher price for commercial pastil is reasonable (M=2.94) shows that commercial pastil in terms of price for respondents is not strongly impact. The statement "price of commercial pastil affects where to buy" has the highest mean for commercial pastil price, indicating that the price of commercial pastil affects customers' decisions on where to buy commercial pastil outside the school. The statement "I often choose commercial pastil because it fits my daily budget" has the lowest mean price for commercial pastil, indicating that respondents were not going outside the school to get pastil at a lower price. According to research of Baes et al. (2023) in the Philippine context that customers are likely to compare pastils from outside on cost and the balance between price and quality, seeking the best deal for their budget.

Table 3 compares prices between school-based and commercial pastils. The data reveals a statistically significant difference between the two groups, with school-based pastil recording a much higher mean score of 4.43 compared to the 2.91 of commercial pastil. These differences are statistically significant, as evidenced by the computed t-value of 48.380, which vastly exceeds the critical t-value of 2.009, and the p-value of 0.007; this indicates that the school-based option is the best option for respondents. According to Penaflor (n.d.) in the Philippine context that school food vendors advocate for prices that strike a balance between profitability and affordability, making them appealing to price-sensitive student customers.

Table 4 shows the respondents' evaluation of the taste quality of school-based pastil, with an overall mean score of 3.88, described as "High." The data suggests The data reveals that school-based pastil offers generally taste better (M=3.74), prefer the taste of the pastil sold by a particular vendor (M=3.90), offers variety of flavors (M=3.87), consistency of taste (M=3.77), walk around the campus if taste is better

Table 1  
Price (School-Based Pastil)

Statement	Mean Score	Description
School-based pastil offers affordable pastil	4.65	Very High
The price of school-based pastil affects where they decide to buy	4.32	High
Choosing school-based pastil because it fits their daily budget	4.55	Very High
Willing to pay more at school-based pastil if they offer larger portions.	4.42	High
Paying a slightly higher price for school-based is reasonable when it gives better perceived value.	4.23	High
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.43</b>	<b>High</b>

Legend: 1.00-1.49 – Very Low, 1.50-2.49 – Low, 2.50-3.49 – Moderate, 3.50-4.49 – High, 4.50-5.00 – Very High

Table 2  
Price (Commercial Pastil)

Statement	Mean Score	Description
Commercial pastil offers affordable pastil	3.00	Moderate
The price of commercial pastil affects where they decide to buy	3.35	Moderate
Choosing commercial pastil because it fits their daily budget	2.52	Moderate
I am willing to pay more at commercial pastil if they offer larger portions.	2.74	Moderate
Paying a slightly higher price for commercial pastil is reasonable when it gives better perceived value.	2.94	Moderate
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.91</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

Legend: 1.00-1.49 – Very Low, 1.50-2.49 – Low, 2.50-3.49 – Moderate, 3.50-4.49 – High, 4.50-5.00 – Very High

Table 3  
Comparison of the price between school-based pastil and commercial pastil

	Mean Score	T-comp	p-value	T-crit	Remarks
School-based pastil	4.43	48.380	0.007	2.009	Significant
Commercial pastil	2.91				

(M=4.10), it shows that school-based pastil in terms of taste for respondents have strongly impact. The statement "I will walk within campus to buy pastil if the taste is better" shows the highest mean for school-based pastil for taste, indicating that customers have many pastil stores to choose from on campus. The statement "school-based pastil generally tastes better" has the lowest mean for school-based pastil taste, indicating that the taste was sometimes inconsistent. According to research of Murimi et al. (2016) that if customers are going to taste the food, the food's appearance should be an important factor for all food inside the school.

Table 5 shows the respondents' evaluation of the taste quality of school-based pastil, with an overall mean score of 3.26, described as "Moderate." The data reveals that commercial pastil offers generally taste better (M=3.10), prefer the taste of the pastil sold by a particular vendor (M=3.06), offers variety of flavors (M=4.03), consistency of taste (M=3.74), walk outside the campus if taste is better (M=2.35), it shows that commercial pastil in terms of taste for respondents have moderately strongly impact. The statement "commercial pastil offers a greater variety of flavors" has the highest mean price for commercial pastil, indicating that commercial pastil offers a greater variety of flavours at every pastil vendor outside the school. The statement "I will walk outside campus to buy pastil if the taste is better" has the lowest mean for commercial pastil for taste, indicating that customers were not going outside the

school solely for pastil taste. Linet (2021) stated to her study that eating out for dining as a student is not good, and it is a waste of time and money.

Table 6 compares taste between school-based and commercial pastils. The results indicate a statistically significant difference in favor of the school-based pastil. School-based pastil achieved a higher mean score of 3.88, indicating "High", whereas commercial pastil had a mean of 3.26, indicating "Moderate". These differences are statistically significant, as indicated by the computed t-value of 21.206, which far exceeds the critical t-value of 2.001; this indicates that school-based pastil has a better taste than commercial pastil. According to the study of Mohamad et al. (2023) states that students are more likely to continue purchasing from on-campus food service providers if they are satisfied with them.

Table 7 shows the respondents' evaluation of the convenience of school-based pastil, with an overall mean score of 4.30, indicating "High" convenience. The data reveal that school-based pastil is closer to the vicinity (M=4.68), more convenient during short breaks (M=4.74), offers many payment methods (M=3.87), has fast or reasonable service (M=4.19), and has enough tables and chairs (M=4.00). This shows that school-based pastil, in terms of taste, has a substantial impact on respondents. The statement "Commercial pastil has enough tables and chairs for dining" has the highest mean for convenience, indicating that commercial pastil offers greater

Table 4  
Taste (School-Based Pastil)

Statement	Mean Score	SD	Description
School-based pastil generally taste better	3.74	1.24	High
Prefer the taste of the pastil sold by a particular school-based pastil.	3.90	1.25	High
School-based pastil offers a greater variety of flavors (e.g. chicken, beef, tuna)	3.87	0.99	High
Consistency of taste (same good taste every time) is a reason for they to return to school-based pastil.	3.77	1.02	High
Willing to walk around campus to buy pastil if the taste is significantly better.	4.10	1.11	High
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.88</b>	<b>0.12</b>	<b>High</b>

Legend: 1.00-1.49 – Very Low, 1.50-2.49 – Low, 2.50-3.49 – Moderate, 3.50-4.49 – High, 4.50-5.00 – Very High

Table 5  
Taste (Commercial Pastil)

Statement	Mean Score	Description
Commercial pastil generally tastes better	3.10	Moderate
Prefer the taste of the pastil sold by a particular commercial pastil.	3.06	Moderate
Commercial pastil offers a greater variety of flavors (e.g. chicken, beef, tuna)	4.03	High
Consistency of taste (same good taste every time) is a reason I return to commercial pastil.	3.74	High
Willing to walk outside campus to buy pastil if the taste is significantly better.	2.35	Low
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.26</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

Legend: 1.00-1.49 – Very Low, 1.50-2.49 – Low, 2.50-3.49 – Moderate, 3.50-4.49 – High, 4.50-5.00 – Very High

Table 6  
Comparison of taste between school-based pastil and commercial pastil

	Mean Score	T-comp	p-value	T-crit	Remarks
School-based pastil	3.88	21.206	0.637	2.001	Significant
Commercial pastil	3.26				

Table 7  
Convenience (School-Based Pastil)

Statement	Mean Score	Description
I buy school-based pastil mainly because they are nearer to the vicinity	4.68	Very High
School-based pastil are more convenient during short breaks	4.74	Very High
School-based pastil offers many payment methods.	3.87	High
The speed of service in school-based pastil is fast or reasonable.	4.19	High
School-based pastil have enough tables and chairs for dining.	4.00	High
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.30</b>	<b>High</b>

Legend: 1.00-1.49 – Very Low, 1.50-2.49 – Low, 2.50-3.49 – Moderate, 3.50-4.49 – High, 4.50-5.00 – Very High



Table 8  
Convenience (Commercial Pastil)

Statement	Mean Score	Description
I buy commercial pastil mainly because they are nearer to the vicinity	2.10	Very Low
Commercial pastil are more convenient during short breaks	2.10	Very Low
Commercial pastil offers many payment methods.	4.16	High
The speed of service in the commercial pastil is fast or reasonable.	3.26	Moderate
Commercial pastil has enough tables and chairs for dining.	3.74	High
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.07</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

Legend: 1.00-1.49 – Very Low, 1.50-2.49 – Low, 2.50-3.49 – Moderate, 3.50-4.49 – High, 4.50-5.00 – Very High

Table 9  
Comparison of convenience between school-based pastil and commercial pastil

	Mean Score	T-comp	p-value	T-crit	Remarks
School-based pastil	4.30	25.175	0.005	2.029	Significant
Commercial pastil	3.07				

convenience by providing more seating for customers. The statement "School-based pastil offers many payment methods" has the lowest mean for commercial pastil for convenience, indicating that payment methods at school-based pastil vendors include cash or QR code payments, and that customers mostly pay cash because the data signal is weak and Wi-Fi is limited. Rosid et al. (2019) observed that the payment process at the school's food stores creates long queues and an uncomfortable experience.

Table 8 shows the respondents' evaluation of the convenience of commercial pastil, with an overall mean score of 3.07, indicating "Moderate" convenience. The data reveals that commercial pastil is nearer to its vicinity ( $M=2.10$ ), more convenient during short breaks ( $M=2.10$ ), offers many payment methods ( $M=4.16$ ), speed of service is fast or reasonable ( $M=3.26$ ), enough tables and chairs ( $M=3.74$ ), it shows that commercial pastil in terms of convenience for respondents have moderately strongly impact. The statement "Commercial pastil has enough tables and chairs for dining" has the highest mean for convenience, indicating that commercial pastil offers greater convenience by providing more seating for customers. The statements "I buy commercial pastil mainly because they are nearer to the vicinity" and "Commercial pastil are more convenient during short breaks" have the lowest means for commercial pastil for convenience, indicating that these statements were not customer-friendly, especially when they have class or work and going far away to eat only pastil. The study of Townsend (2014) that shorter lunch breaks are not friendly to students who must go outside.

Table 9 presents a comparison of convenience between school-based and commercial pastils. The results indicate a statistically significant difference in favor of the school-based pastil. The school-based pastil mean score is 4.30, which is "High", whereas the commercial pastil mean score is 3.07 ("Moderate"). These differences are statistically confirmed by the substantial t-computed value of 25.175, which is far greater than the critical t-value of 2.029. Furthermore, the p-value is 0.005, which is significantly lower than the standard 0.05 threshold. This means that school-based pastil is more convenient for customers than commercial pastil. According to research by Licudan and Caballes (2023), students may be more satisfied if the pastil store is well-lit, spacious, and comfortable, and if appropriate facilities for eating and socializing are available.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study shows that Convenience and Price are the main reasons students choose school-based pastil vendors. Even though commercial (outside) vendors offer more flavors and better payment options, students rarely choose them because they are too far away. Surprisingly, students preferred the school-based pastil's taste and said they would not walk off campus even if the food there tasted better. In short, because students have short breaks and limited budgets, school-based vendors are their first choice, while outside vendors are just a "backup" option.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed: Based on these results, we suggest the following:

For School-Based Vendors:

- *Pastil Consistency*: Pastil owner vendors should offer tasty pastils and have a backup plan every day, even if there are plenty of customers.
- *Give Good Portions*: To keep customers happy, make sure the amount of food served matches the price.
- *More Payment Method Initiatives*: Invest more in internet connections like Wi-Fi, to offer more payment methods, such as online payment

For Commercial (Outside) Vendors:

- *Offer Affordable Pastil*: Pastil vendors outside the school
- *Pastil Extends Until Night*: Pastil vendors should adjust their operating hours and take advantage of it, since students are not allowed to enter the school at night due to curfew.

For Future Researchers:

- *Study Other Schools*: This study focused only on students at Mindanao State University, General Santos City. Future researchers should try this study at other universities to see if the results are the same.

## Appendices

### APPENDIX A. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Price, Taste, Convenience: A Comparative Study on School-Based and Commercial Pastil Vendors

##### Questionnaire

##### School-Based Pastil

##### Part I.Price

Price and Affordability	1	2	3	4	5
1.School-based pastil offers affordable pastil.					
2.The price of school-based pastil affects where I decide to buy.					
3.I often choose school-based pastil because it fits my daily budget.					
4.I am willing to pay more at school-based pastil if they offer larger portions.					
5.Paying a slightly higher price for school-based is reasonable when it gives better perceived value.					

##### Part II.Taste

Taste	1	2	3	4	5
1. School-based pastil generally tastes better.					
2. I prefer the taste of the pastil sold by a particular school-based pastil.					
3. School-based pastil offer a greater variety of flavors (e.g., chicken, beef, tuna).					
4. Consistency of taste (same good taste every time) is a reason I return to school-based pastil					
5. I will walk around campus to buy pastil if the taste is significantly better.					

##### Part III.Convenience

Convenience	1	2	3	4	5
1. I buy school-based pastil mainly because it's nearer to my vicinity.					
2. School-based pastil are more convenient during short breaks.					
3. School-based pastil offers many payment method (Gcash, Cash, QRPh)					
4. The speed of service in school-based pastil is fast or reasonable.					
5. School-based pastil have enough tables and chairs for dining					

### APPENDIX B. SUMMARY OF RAW DATA

Price (School-based pastil vs Commercial Pastil)		
Comparison	Mean	Interpretation
School-based	4.43	High
Commercial	2.91	Moderate

#### Price, Taste, Convenience: A Comparative Study on School-Based and Commercial Pastil Vendors

##### Questionnaire

##### Commercial Pastil

##### Part I.Price

Price and Affordability	1	2	3	4	5
1.Commercial pastil offers affordable pastil.					
2.The price of commercial pastil affects where I decide to buy.					
3.I often choose commercial pastil because it fits my daily budget.					
4.I am willing to pay more at commercial pastil if they offer larger portions.					
5.Paying a slightly higher price for commercial pastil is reasonable when it gives better perceived value.					

##### Part II.Taste

Taste	1	2	3	4	5
1. Commercial pastil generally tastes better.					
2. I prefer the taste of the pastil sold by a particular commercial pastil.					
3. Commercial pastil offer a greater variety of flavors (e.g., chicken, beef, tuna).					
4. Consistency of taste (same good taste every time) is a reason I return to commercial pastil					
5. I will walk outside campus to buy pastil if the taste is significantly better.					

##### Part III.Convenience

Convenience	1	2	3	4	5
1. I buy commercial pastil mainly because it's nearer to my vicinity.					
2. Commercial pastil are more convenient during short breaks.					
3. Commercial pastil offers many payment method (Gcash, Cash, QRPh)					
4. The speed of service in commercial pastil is fast or reasonable.					
5. Commercial pastil have enough tables and chairs for dining					

Taste (School-based pastil vs Commercial Pastil)		
Comparison	Mean	Interpretation
School-based	3.88	paHigh
Commercial	3.26	Moderate

Convenience (School-based pastil vs Commercial Pastil)		
Comparison	Mean	Interpretation
School-based	4.30	High
Commercial	3.07	Moderate

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