

# A Study on The Effects of COVID-19 With Reference to Street Food Vendors of Kolkata

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## ABSTRACT

The novel coronavirus disease outbreak (COVID-19) has had a severe impact on the street food industry, particularly in developing nations. This abstract explores the economic, social, and health-related implications of the pandemic on street food sellers. Economically, the methods taken to stop the virus' transmission have caused a sharp drop in consumer traffic, leading to lower income and financial instability. Socially, the pandemic has disrupted gatherings and communal meals, leading to contactless payment methods, online ordering, and delivery services, and rearranging their stalls to maintain physical distance. Finally, the effects of COVID-19 on health have been a major issue.

For the proposed study, I have gathered 100 respondents from various areas of Kolkata, including Shyambazar, Howrah, Sealdah, Salt Lake, Sodepur, and Khardah. After gathering the data, I analyzed it with various statistical techniques and came to my conclusions. Street food vendors face a higher risk of catching the virus due to their profession, which involves handling food and having close contact with clients. They are now required to follow strict hygiene guidelines and have increased expenses and logistical difficulties. Despite these difficulties, street food vendors have proven their adaptability and perseverance. Governments and non-governmental organizations have offered support in the form of funding, educational opportunities, and policy changes. The main goals of initiatives to assist street food sellers should be to ensure their economic recovery, give them access to social and medical services, and encourage sustainable practices that put public health and livelihoods first.

**Keywords:** *Kolkata Street Food industry, Consumer Traffic, Financial Instability, Online Ordering, Social Implications.*

**Introduction:** The COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, has dramatically influenced society and economy worldwide. Its consequences have been felt in a variety of industries, including the food business, where street food sellers play an important role. Street food sellers are an important part of Kolkata's dynamic culinary culture, delivering a wide range of delectable foods to locals and tourists alike.

The purpose of this research is to shed light on the specific effects of COVID-19 on Kolkata Street food sellers. As the pandemic progressed, these vendors, who were frequently operating in densely populated neighborhoods and bustling markets, encountered various obstacles. The limits and safety procedures put

in place to stop the virus's spread had a profound impact on their livelihoods and the whole street food ecosystem.

The flavors, fragrances, and cultural significance of Kolkata's street food scene are legendary. Puchka (pani puri), kathi rolls, jhal muri, and other exquisite desserts are popular in the city. Street food vendors are an important component of this culinary scene, supplying people from all walks of life with economical and delicious meal alternatives. Their companies are frequently dependent on foot traffic, crowded markets, and the lively ambiance of the streets.

However, the arrival of COVID-19 caused a significant shift in the street food industry. Lockdowns, social distancing norms, and restrictions on public gatherings all had a significant influence on the operations and revenue of street food sellers. Fear of infection, along with a drop in footfall, worsened their problems, resulting in huge financial losses and uncertainty about their future.

This research will investigate the various consequences of the epidemic on Kolkata's street food sellers. It will examine the economic ramifications, such as lost income, decreased client demand, and increased operational expenses due to cleanliness and safety regulations. The study will also investigate the social and psychological dimensions, such as the mental health toll, societal stigma, and the resilience displayed by these vendors in the face of adversity.

This study aims to give significant insights to policymakers, local authorities, and key stakeholders by analyzing the specific issues experienced by street food sellers in Kolkata during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings can help to establish targeted interventions, support systems, and policy reforms to lessen the impact of future crises on street food sellers and ensure the sector's long-term viability.

Finally, this study recognizes the importance of street food vendors in Kolkata's culinary fabric, as well as their vulnerability to the COVID-19 pandemic. By investigating the economic, social, and psychological components, we hope to develop knowledge that might drive efforts to safeguard and empower these sellers, allowing them to overcome the pandemic's obstacles and continue to enrich Kolkata's dynamic street food culture.

### **The Objective of the Study:**

- 1. To Analyse the street food vendor's financial struggles.**
- 2. To Examine the consumer perception towards Street food Vendors.**

### **Research Methodology:**

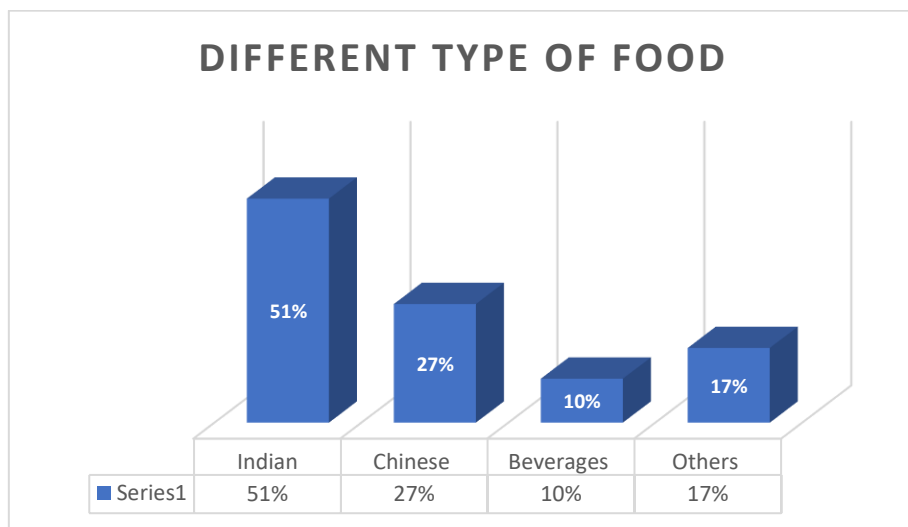
- **Research Design:** The primary data survey will be designed as a cross-sectional study. It intends to collect data at a given point in time to acquire information on the effects of COVID-19 on Kolkata's street food vendors. This design allows for the investigation of various factors and their interactions over a set period.
- **Sampling Method:** For this survey, a combination of convenient sampling and stratified sampling will be used. Initially, a list of Kolkata Street food sellers would be developed utilizing existing databases, municipal governments, and related groups. A random selection of merchants will be chosen from this

list to ensure representation from all sections of the city. Stratified sampling will be used to achieve an appropriate distribution across various locations and types of street food vendors (e.g., mobile carts, booths).

**Data Presentation, Analysis, and Findings:**

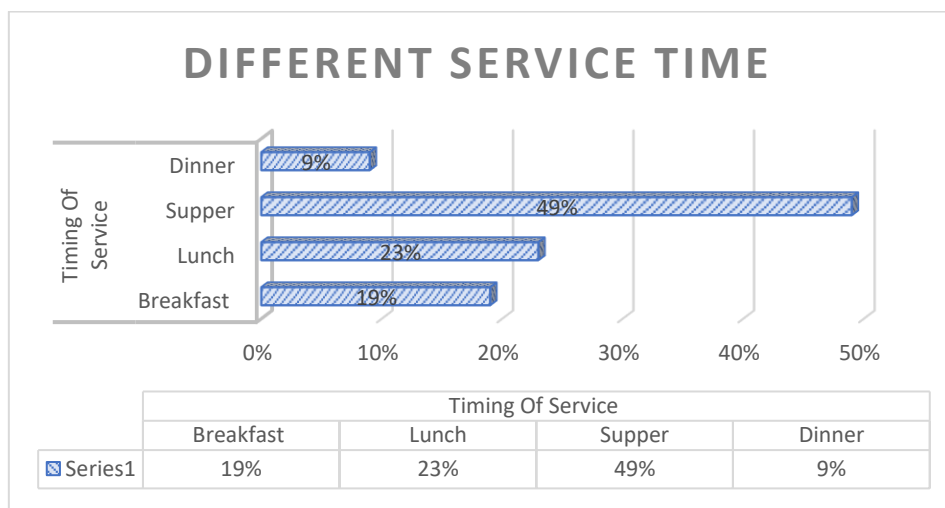
**Table 1: Showing % of Different types of food**

	Type Of Food			
In Terms	Indian	Chinese	Beverages	Others
%	51%	27%	10%	17%



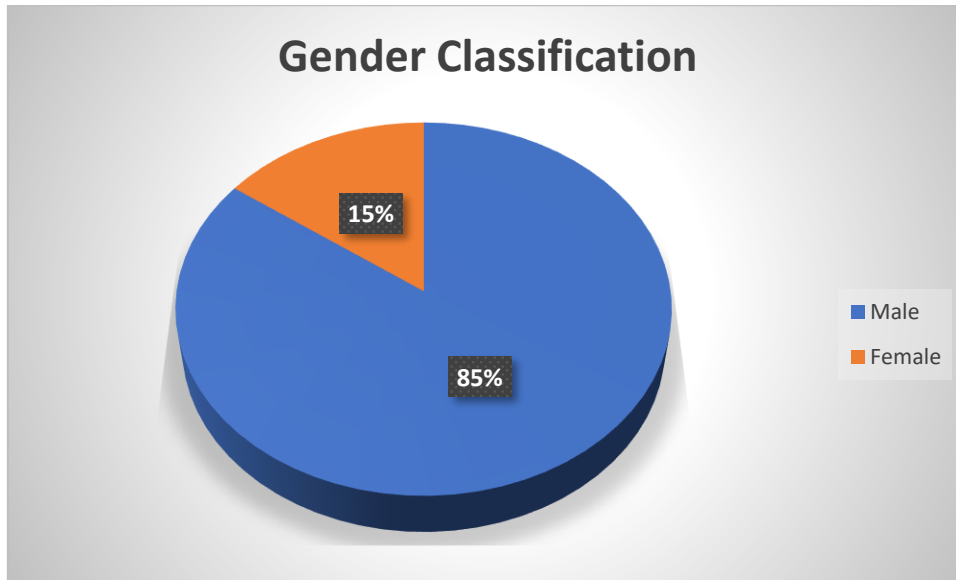
**Table 2: Showing % of Different Service Time**

	Timing Of Service			
In Terms	Breakfast	Lunch	Supper	Dinner
%	19%	23%	49%	9%



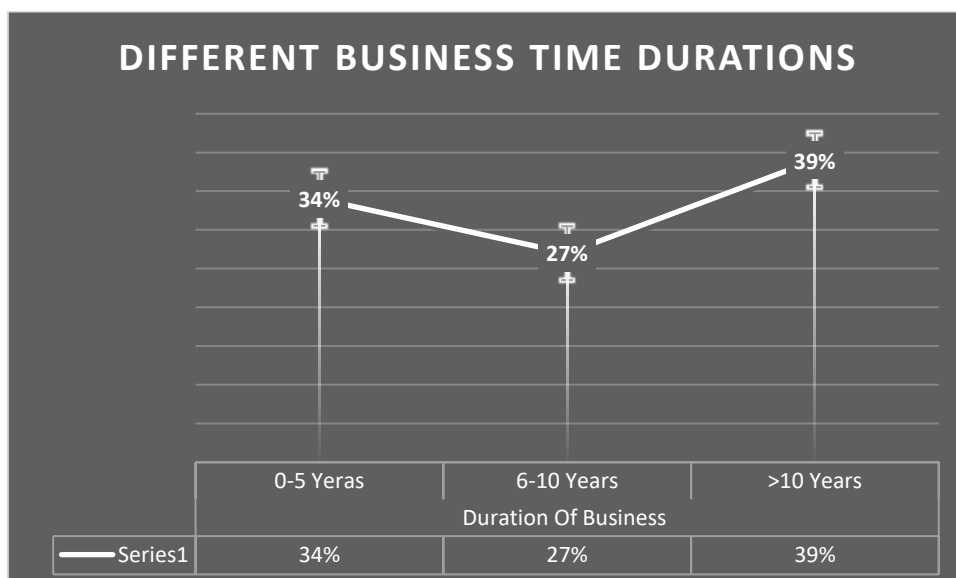
**Table 3: Showing The % Of Males & Female**

In Terms	Male	Female
%	85%	15%



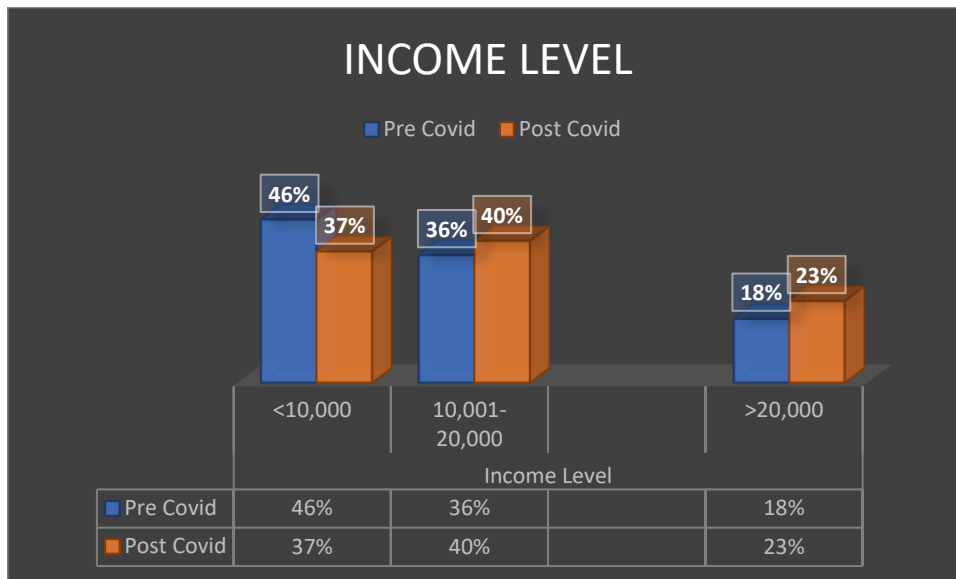
**Table 4: Showing the % Of different Business Time Durations**

Duration Of Business			
In Terms	0-5 Years	6-10 Years	>10 Years
%	34%	27%	39%



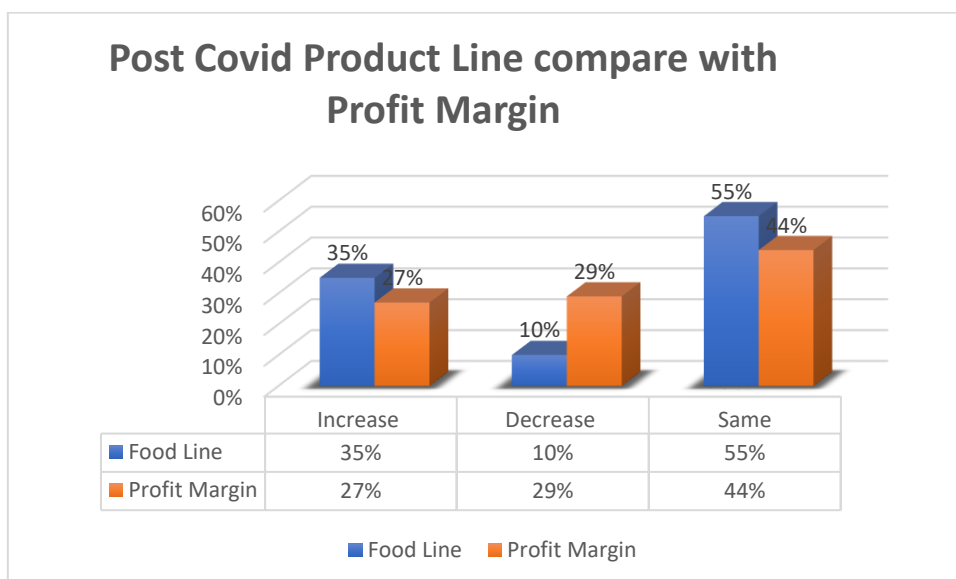
**Table 5: Showing The % of Level of Income (Pre Covid-19 Situation)**

	Income Level		
	<10,000	10,001-20,000	>20,000
Pre Covid	46%	36%	18%
Post Covid	37%	40%	23%



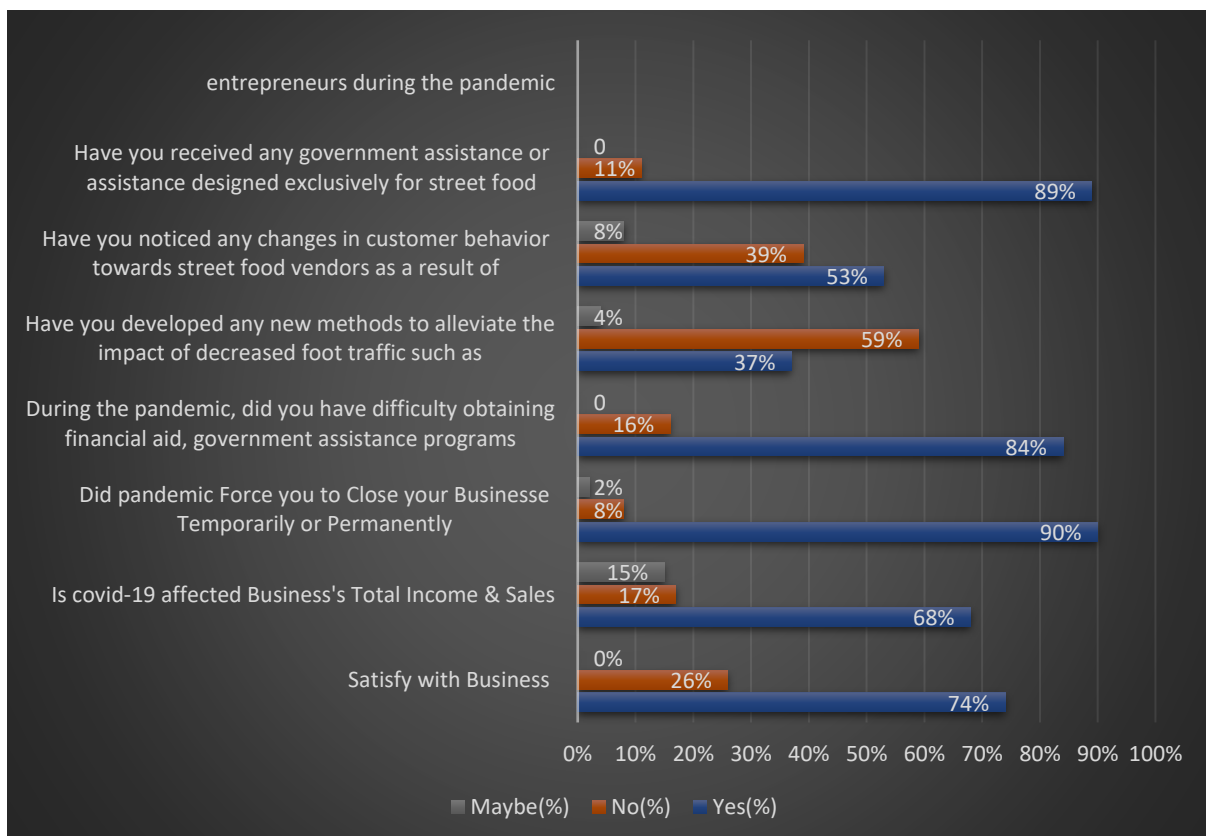
**Table 7: Showing The % of Level Of Food Items (Post Covid-19 Situation)**

	Post-Covid Product Line		
	Increase	Decrease	Same
Food Line	35%	10%	55%
Profit Margin	27%	29%	44%



**Table 9: Showing The % Of Opinions (Yes or No) in Different Questions**

	Yes (%)	No (%)	Maybe (%)
Satisfy with Business	74%	26%	NIL
Is covid-19 affected the Business's Total Income & Sales	68%	17%	15%
Did the pandemic Force you to Close your Business Temporarily or Permanently?	90%	8%	2%
During the pandemic, did you have difficulty obtaining financial aid, government assistance programs	84%	16%	NIL
Have you developed any new methods to alleviate the impact of decreased foot traffic such as	37%	59%	4%
Have you noticed any changes in customer behaviors toward street food vendors as a result of	53%	39%	8%
Have you received any government assistance or assistance designed exclusively for street food	89%	11%	NIL



**Findings:**

Objectives No 1: 1. To Analyse the street food vendor's financial struggles.	Changes in food handling practise and income level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to lockdowns, movement restrictions, and decreased food traffic in urban areas, street food vendors lost a significant amount of money. However, statistics suggest that the fraction of merchants making less than \$10,000 per month prior to Covid 19 is declining. After covid 19, the income of street food vendors gradually increases. 35% of food sellers out of 100 are expanding their menu options.</li> </ul>
	Examine the use of digital platforms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using statistical research, we discovered that 37% of 100 street food sellers established online ordering, delivery services, and contactless payment, while 59% did not use any kind of digital platform or other approach.</li> </ul>
	Inability to obtain financial assistance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many street food sellers, particularly those operating unofficially, encountered difficulties in obtaining financial aid and government assistance programmes. Access to financial help was hampered by a lack of sufficient documentation, a lack of information about available assistance, and administrative obstacles. Approximately 84% of street food sellers out of 100 were denied access to government facilities.</li> </ul>

Objective No 2: To Examine the consumer perception towards Street food Vendors.	Maintain cleanliness and hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After the pandemic, most vendors maintain hygiene by cleaning the cart, washing their hands before preparing food, wearing masks, and taking any other required precautions to maintain hygiene since customers are more concerned about safety and hygiene after Covid 19.</li> </ul>
	Consumer's preference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumers like Indian and Chinese cuisine from street vendors.</li> <li>• The majority of customers choose to get their evening refreshments from street food sellers.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Following the epidemic, consumers' demand for street food has progressively increased, and as a result, vendor sales have soared.</li><li>• A competent market vendor should be satisfied with their business and strive to expand it.</li></ul>
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### Limitations of the Study:

The study's findings may be limited in generalizability due to convenience sampling and stratified sampling techniques. It is important to consider the potential for biases and limitations in the accuracy of the data collected, such as self-reporting bias, recall bias, and limited scope.

### Conclusion:

1. According to the findings of this study, the COVID-19 epidemic has had a significant impact on Kolkata's street food vendors. However, it is obvious that suppliers have responded to changing conditions by instituting hygiene and safety practices, which have helped recover client trust. Demand for street food has gradually increased, resulting in higher sales and earnings for many vendors.

2. One promising finding is that a sizable majority of sellers have embraced sanitary practices such as cleaning carts, handwashing, and wearing masks. This demonstrates their commitment to customer safety and meeting the rising hygiene and sanitation expectations. This shift towards better hygienic practices is crucial for keeping client trust and loyalty following the pandemic.

3. The research also underlines consumers' fondness for Indian and Chinese street food. This information can help suppliers customize their menus to client demand and optimize their offerings. Furthermore, statistics reveal that street food vendors continue to be a popular option for late-night refreshments among customers.

4. Despite the positive developments, it is crucial to highlight the challenges that street food vendors have experienced during the pandemic. As a result of the limitations, lockdowns, and decreased foot traffic in urban areas, several vendors faced significant financial losses. Access to financial assistance and government assistance programs proved to be a significant impediment for many sellers, especially those operating illegally. It is vital to address and support these barriers to ensure street food vendors' resilience and sustainability.

### Recommendation:

1. Maintain and prioritize hygienic practices: Even after the pandemic, street food vendors should maintain and prioritize sanitary practices. Cart cleaning, handwashing, and the use of personal protective equipment should become standard practices to improve client safety and trust.



2. Menu Diversification: To appeal to a wide range of consumer interests, merchants should consider diversifying their menu choices. This can increase revenue by attracting a broader customer base.
3. Digital Solution Adoption: According to the survey, many suppliers have yet to implement digital platforms for online ordering, delivery services, and contactless payment. Vendors should look into these options in order to improve client comfort and expand their reach.
4. Streamlining Financial Aid Obtain: Efforts should be made to make financial aid and government assistance programs more accessible to street food vendors. Clear information, fewer administrative hurdles, and reasonable documentation requirements can all help suppliers get the help they need during challenging times.
5. Capacity Building and Training: Business management, financial literacy, and digital skills training programs and initiatives would assist vendors. These workshops can provide vendors with the knowledge and skills they need to adapt to changing conditions, expand their businesses, and improve their overall resilience.
6. Collaborations and Networks: Establishing collaborative networks among street food vendors, local governments, and key stakeholders can facilitate the exchange of best practices, expertise, and resources. This collaborative technique can help suppliers overcome obstacles, acquire support, and advocate for their common interests.
7. By putting these ideas into action, policymakers, local governments, and stakeholders may be able to reinvigorate and grow Kolkata's street food sellers, ensuring their long-term sustainability and preserving the city's particular street food culture.

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