Social Media Narrative and its Prosumers: A Systematic Review from 2016-2023

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Abstract

The general objective of this systematic review of the scientific literature was to gather scientific evidence on the treatment of social media narrative and its prosumers. The review considered original publications in journals indexed in Scopus, Scielo, and Dialnet. Two types of analysis were developed, in order to eliminate possible biases. The quantitative analysis allowed us to locate the countries, languages, categorical treatment, results, and other aspects where the most research on transmedia narrative is being conducted. In this way, the scope of the topic in the scientific publications reviewed was established. On the other hand, by means of qualitative analysis, after the screening process, the approach of different perspectives was established: where the research on social media narrative in content sharing spaces leans towards, evidencing an inclination towards Discord. The search for the characterization of narrative content in social media was also carried out, and finally, the conception or treatment of the prosumer's role in the creation of content. It is concluded that the studies where the prosumer of digital platforms is related to a social media narrative should be increased to build and sustain the transcendental role of this as a value for the loyalty of various content in social networks, i.e., be responsible for generating virtual spaces where reliable content is expected to be disseminated.

Keywords: *Social media storytelling; Discord; prosumers; virtual community.*

INTRODUCTION

In the field of social communication, the need arises to observe how research on social media narrative has been increasing, since it is currently a topic moderately mentioned by scientific authors. Likewise, it has been observed that since 2016 there has been a great proliferation and progress in research on social media narrative, so the question arises: how much research has been done on social media narrative and the role of the prosumer?

There is a need to review scientific articles that study social media narrative because, after the confinement caused by COVID-19, the success of digital platforms and the visual and audiovisual content generated on them increased. Gonzáles and Tortolero (2020) comment that, at this time, these platforms were the communication mechanism used by people to shorten the distance gap between them. However, according to Arifianto and Izzudin (2021), the media limited cybernauts with video and audio call services, only some including the screen sharing function.

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In this sense, digital platforms opted to improve the activities provided to their users. In Russia, the Discord application and its role as a social learning platform were investigated (Odinokaya et al., 2021), while in Romania, they opted to experiment and create a growing community with students from different grades and teachers to maintain contact with each other (Vladoiu and Constantinescu, 2020). In the United States, a study aimed to create opportunities for students through virtual spaces, such as Discord servers (Hammond et al., 2022), and another research sought to demonstrate the adaptation and transformation of the use of this app and the consequences of being part of one of these communities (Johnson and Salter, 2022). In Indonesia, it was planned to implement Discord instructors for better moderation of group interaction with students (Arifianto and Izzudin, 2021).

The term virtual communities is relatively new since these spaces had a boom after the pandemic, and these publications are part of the studies that investigated this virtual phenomenon. For example, in Spain, the virtualization of the reality of these communities was proposed through the search for messages, meanings, and frameworks (Goyez 2021), Another study sought to examine how young people in a high school build a socialization link (Fernández and Gutierrez, 2017), while another one described the interactions of an online community and the content shared among users (Cervi, 2019); Amo & Garcia (2022) described the attitudes, knowledge, and competencies of the fanon of a community; in Indonesia, the interrelationship between networks and waste was analyzed (Redyantanu et al., 2022); in Saudi Arabia, the role of social networks in a virtual environment was validated (Fayez, et al., 2023); in Mexico, the digital skills of group members were identified, describing the actions and resources they share in a community (Cordero and Gonzales, 2022).

Along these lines, other publications have focused on prosumers, who are users who were originally consumers of content and have leaped to be the ones who now produce content for others while consuming content from third parties. For example, in Peru and Spain, through a collaboration, the content generated by prosumer users of mobile games, who disseminate content through social media storytelling on digital platforms, was investigated and analyzed (Yucra et al., 2022). In Spain and Italy, an analysis of the interrelationship of a digital music platform with consumer and prosumer users was sought (Vizcaíno et al., 2022).

Regarding research conducted in Spain, one study chose to investigate the dominant languages in the consumption and production of different formats on the web by young people (Fernandez et al., 2020) and another addressed how millennials assume their role as prosumers and prosumers in corporate networks (Martinez et al., 2018). In Mexico, the evolution of information control and the creation of digital content in students was analyzed (Castillejos, 2019). In the south of the continent, in Peru, a study sought to know the perception of content creators and their role in content creation (Mateus, 2022). In Argentina, the balance of a prosumer of the private good and the prosumer good was determined (Alderete, 2017) and in Uruguay, prosumers and their participation in networks were studied (Morales et al., 2018).

This literature review made it possible to identify studies that relate prosumers of digital platforms with a narrative that has been little researched, the social media narrative. In Peru, the aim was to define the social media narrative and determine the importance of prosumer and its evolution in content production (Karbaum, 2018).

In addition, the presence of transmedia storytelling in social media was discovered, being the following publications the ones that mention the subject. For example, in England, the mode of use of platforms during the pandemic was studied by Wong et al. (2021); in Spain, research proposed to analyze the strategy of transmedia storytelling and interaction in streaming services (Herrero et al., 2020); another one proposed to analyze the construction of the digital transmedia narrative in short films, video games and ARGs

(Álvarez, 2019); another study discovered the key elements and characteristics that differentiate transmedia narrative (Camacho and Segarra, 2019). Similarly, Gonzales and Tortolero (2020) summarized relevant information on the influence of social media use, and Quintana and Osuna (2020) analyzed the digital habits of adolescents.

Crossing the Atlantic, in Argentina, the inclusion of transmedia narratives in the pedagogical field was analyzed (Alonso and Murgia, 2020); In Peru, the contributions to the constructions of transmedia worlds were reflected upon (Altarama and Menacho, 2018); in Colombia, the scope of transmedia narrative in the understanding of readings was evaluated by Rodriguez (2021), while Pinto et al. (2022) analyzed transmedia projects referring to nonfiction. Meanwhile, in Canada, the aim was to understand social networks in their role as a mystery (Gauthier, 2018).

In this sense, the importance of transmedia narratives used by prosumers in social media is examined, so it was decided to conduct a systematic review of the scientific literature, which had the general objective of finding evidence on the treatment of social media narrative and the role of its prosumers. The scientific publications were collected from the years ranging from 2016 to 2023 in indexed journals. The specific objectives were: to systematize scientific articles that mention the narrative of a prosumer in a community and to review the nature of the narrative used in prosumer content.

In this way, the need for transmedia storytelling is identified, based on the capacity of the narrative universe, so that there is a certain independence on the part of content producers when deciding which narrative to use (Herrero et al., 2020). It is in this ability to decide that strategies are generated for the loyalty of an audience.

METHOD

For the present literature review, 50 articles were analyzed subject to the social media narrative and prosumers in Discord communities, which, through an initial general review of the state of the scientific approach, the tendency towards the Discord platform was identified. According to the indicators of the literature review, during the course of the search for sources, several platforms of reliability were rigorously examined.

To investigate these articles, several stages were developed. First, a review was made of the Scopus database, which is an accredited instrument and has articles from scientific journals with indexed and quality bases. This was followed by Scielo, which brings together various Latin American collections with topics that meet the quality requirements, the Peruvian initiative being led by CONCYTEC. Thirdly, it was decided to use a source from Dialnet, a Hispanic scientific content portal that offers access to full texts focused on the social sciences and humanities, due to the information obtained from that publication.

In this search, the keywords used were social media narrative, digital narratives, storytelling, prosumers, virtual communities, Discord communities, and Discord. It should be noted that for this process, a filter of 8 years was used because the study has antecedents, and since the social factor is present, as time goes by it may vary; but in the past 8 years, the topic has been dealt with. On the other hand, it is necessary to mention that the sources after the pandemic are the most recent since the information on the events in this area is scarce after 8 years.

The choice of sources were chosen by the descriptors in the domain of social networks and education, the latter due to the events after 2020, which refers to the global pandemic, where cyberspace became more relevant to establish social links.

The information provided was judicious and fair. The following are the points taken into consideration for this election.

1. Sources: Scientific articles published in Scopus, Scielo, and Dialnet platforms.

2. Type of article: For this study, the articles needed to be original and scientific, excluding other types, such as essays, books, theses, etc.

3. Content: All information had to be related under the criteria of narrative, social media, prosumer, virtual community, and Discord, being the last mentioned one with the most recent articles due to its boom during the confinement of COVID-19.

4. Sources that address necessary topics: During the process, data were placed in Excel tables to differentiate and classify them according to criteria that evidenced the usefulness of the article.

5. Date of publication: Sources collected were published during the period from 2016 to 2023.

Thanks to the use of Scopus, Scielo, and Dialnet databases, it was possible to continue and the publications were screened by a scientific literature review.

Scientific articles published in different languages were included since the topic investigated is a worldwide study. The main methodology was an integrative literature review (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005), which is a modality of the systematic review with PRISMA. For this reason, the review is being adjusted to the scientific evidence on the social media narrative and the prosumer's work. It includes, therefore, qualitative and quantitative studies in the analysis of the topic or phenomenon, as well as the quantitative and qualitative organization of the data systematized through the review. To have full access to the contents, open-access sources were prioritized.

In the first phase of the research, the research was located using the Discord and Narrative categories as a filter, locating 15 scientific articles from the Scopus and Scielo databases. As this process had limited sources, in the second phase 35 more sources were found, including this time the keywords: social media narrative, prosumers, and virtual communities, also considering Dialnet because it disseminates great information in the field of social sciences.

Thus, regardless of language or methodology, all articles related to the object of study on the role of social media narrative in the creation of content and prosumers were taken into account. After the first screening, information from 7 sources was discarded, leaving 43 of them, which mention the information required for a correct analysis.

In this analysis, the data was organized using an Excel workbook, where columns were divided into the title of the article, reference (following APA 7 format), objective (naming the purpose of the project), methodology (mentioning the approach and method used), results (describing the consequences of the work carried out), and conclusion (referring to how the project ended, concerning the objective). In the end, it was possible to identify that 5 of the articles did not comply with the necessary information for the research and 6 did not address the stated objective. Finally, a final selection of 32 articles was obtained.

RESULTS

Since a total of 50 articles were investigated, an analysis was carried out using the screening process. Figure 1 details the procedure of the stages carried out in the collection of scientific articles.
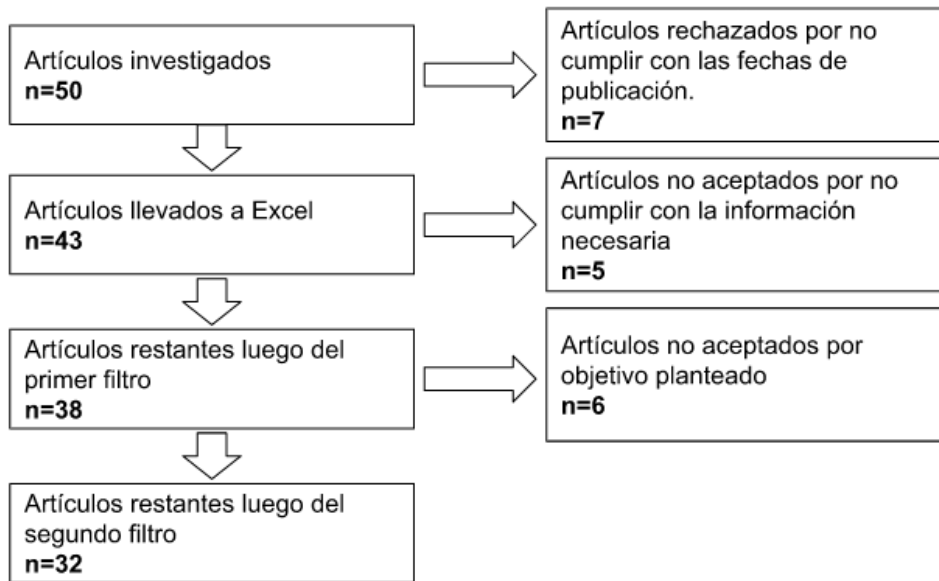
Figure 1 Process of screening articles through Whittemore and Knafl's methodology (2005).

Source: Own elaboration

Bibliometric information

During the analysis carried out, articles were observed that did meet the requirements for selection using two criteria. The first was a quantitative analysis to obtain the data of interest. Secondly, a qualitative analysis of each source. Each article was identified as having at least 15 bibliographic references. Figure 2 shows the number of references to the selected articles employing bars.
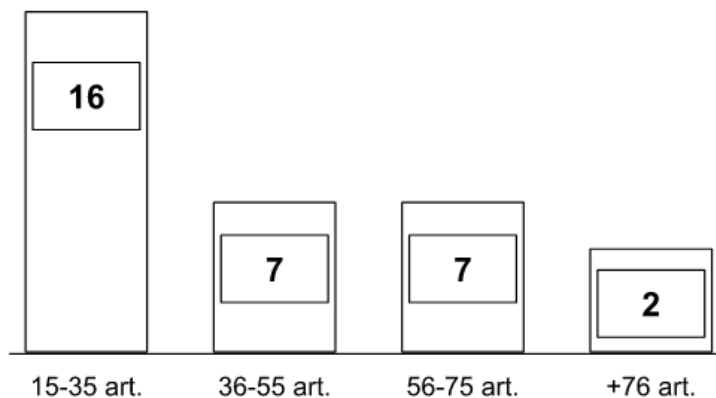

Figure 2 Number of scientific references of the categories analyzed in the articles submitted for review. Source: Own elaboration

The 32 articles found were open-access. They were published in scientific journals indexed in Scopus and Scielo, except for one of them, which was found in the Dialnet search base; however, the study was considered for use in the present study thanks to the valuable information contained in the research. Likewise, it was considered to detail the languages in which the studies found in Table 1 were published.

Table 1. Distribution of sources according to language and indexed base

	LANGUAGE	
	English	Spanish
SCOPUS	19	0
SCIELO	2	10
Another Database (DIALNET)	0	1
TOTAL	21	11

Source: Own elaboration

It was identified that most of the articles were published after 2020, the year in which the COVID-19 pandemic began and when technologies were indispensable for the interaction and communication of individuals. Regarding the distribution by the focus of the studies, it was found that they dealt with the perception of Discord as a space for sharing content, narrative in social media, prosumers, and content, and content in virtual communities. Located in Table 2.

Table 2 Distribution according to the approaches presented in the articles.

Approaches to articles	SCOPUS	SCIELO	ANOTHER DATABASE (DIALNET)
Precepcion de Discord como espacio para compartir contenidos	5	0	0
La narrativa en los medios sociales	6	5	0
Prosumidores y contenidos	2	5	1
Los co ntenidos en las comunidades virtuales	6	2	0
TOTAL	19	12	1

Source: own elaboration

Likewise, it was found that most of the articles were on social media narrative in Spain (n=5), while most of the prosumers and content were studied in Spain and Peru (n=3, each). On the other hand, the countries least mentioned due to lack of studies are Saudi Arabia, England, Russia, and Canada, among others (Table 3).

Table 3 Distribution by country of author and approaches presented in the revised article

Countries by author	Perception of Discord as a space for interacting and sharing content	Narrative in Social Media	Prosumers and content	Contents in Virtual Communities
Spain	0	5	3	5
Peru	0	1	3	0
Colombia	0	2	0	0
Mexico	0	0	1	1
Argentina	0	1	1	0
Uruguay	0	0	1	0
England	0	1	0	0
Russia	1	0	0	0
Rumania	1	0	0	0
Italy	0	0	0	1
United States	2	0	0	0
Canada	0	1	0	0
Indonesia	1	0	0	1
Saudi Arabia	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	5	11	9	9

Source: own elaboration

DISCUSSION

The analysis of the qualitative content of the articles has been divided into subcategories as follows.

Perception of Discord as a space to share content

The five articles analyzed focused on discussing the use of the Discord digital platform in education since they base their study on the period of confinement by Covid-19. It should be noted that it was decided to include these articles in the review due to the relevance of the application in recent years. In the United States, Hammond et al. (2022) determined with a study that Discord was the platform that was most useful for engineering and computer science students, giving the scope of creating opportunities and being able to learn from others, as it turns out to be an educational tool with recent popularity, specifying its functions little explored and forming a sense to the material. Another study done in the same country showed that it is the teachers who require the use of platforms such as Discord to link the teaching management systems since this is how the students do not lose the rhythm of learning, Therefore, taking the Discord communities as virtual classrooms critically reformulates the idea that is held about the application, however, it is noted that there is still a gap in the control of the platform, users are exposed to be victims of cyberbullying by third parties who are not part of the community (Johnson & Salter, 2022).

A Russian research that implemented surveys to students, managed to identify that the motivation of students is influenced by ICTs, resulting in it being seen as a new educational process that allows exploration and development for the acquisition of a good vocabulary, Discord communities as a tool recommendation for teaching a new language is useful and the process is simple (Odinokaya et al., 2021).

Likewise, a quantitative study in Indonesia made use of the Google Forms questionnaire instrument, and identified the experience and acceptance of the use of Discord as an alternative means of virtual learning, yielding a positive result from students, emphasizing that this platform is not a conventional one (Arifianto & Izzudin, 2021).

In Romania, Vladoiu and Constanstinescu (2020) followed a mixed approach, which resulted in the good communication and connection that exists between teachers and students, it is argued that the use of Discord facilitates the exchange of information, whether academic or social, and that users can maintain remote contact without difficulties from the application, contributing in building a strong community on the network

Narrative in social media

About the narratives in social media, it was identified that it is in Spain where this research topic predominates (González & Tortolero, 2020) a publication attributes how social networks are new powers of information dissemination, in which erroneous and alarmist data are also observed, leading to the psychological discomfort of people. Thus, social networks are considered a double-edged sword because they can provide enriching information on the one hand, and the other hand, they can become victims of ill-intentioned information. After an analysis, a study recognized the emergence of the transmedia narratives project in social media, stating that the argument is built through different digital media and languages, thus ensuring the interrelation with the public (Álvarez, 2019).

Another publication by Quintana & Osuna (2020), based on analyzing the digital habits of adolescents through surveys and participatory workshops, recognized that transmedia practices are more frequent among adolescents and it is the informal learning strategy they use, so it is the Internet that significantly increases their self-sufficiency in informal learning thanks to the control they have. On the other hand, Herrero (2020), in a qualitative study through interviews, it was obtained as a result that social networks also bring with them fans of various topics, whether series, video games, movies, and books, among other narratives, feedback and involve each other, creating communities to organize for example the creation of hashtags and virtualize them. This is evidence of the good relationship and communication that exists between the members involved in the fandom of a certain topic.

In the corporate environment, narratives are also present with their application, in a research aimed at discovering the key elements and the differential characteristics of transmedia narrative in corporate communication. Through a case analysis, it was identified that the conditioning indispensable for the emergence of new narratives is the Internet (Camacho & Segarra, 2019).

In Colombia, a publication focused on evaluating the relevance of transmedia narrative in reading comprehension recognized the strengthening of competencies related to the narrative field, evidencing an improvement in reading comprehension thanks to transmedia narrative and the continuous evolution of literal comprehension of texts (Rodrigues, 2021). Another publication analyzed a transmedia project related to non-fiction through a case study, establishing that 3 key elements for the dissection of narratives from the transmedia model are: participation, co-creation, and re-signification of the narrative (Pinto et al., 2022). Therefore, it is understood that using narratives for the creation of transmedia content requires the use of the following key elements.

Social networks play a role of mystery that hints at the subtlety in which transmedia narratives are handled so that in the face of future social media emergencies, an inclusive mode of reception is obtained (Gauthier, 2018). Since several authors mention "emergencies," Wong et al. (2021) oriented their research to review the mode of use of digital platforms during a pandemic. After an analysis of experiences, it was specified that COVID-19 opened a new dimension thanks to the exchange of information on recent events, being of vital importance that users can identify the quality and reliability of the brands present.

As already mentioned, one of the new dimensions that developed after this crisis was the emergence of virtual classrooms, spaces where the use of transmedia narratives was implemented from a pedagogical perspective. In this sense, Alonso and Murgia (2020) identified thanks to collection techniques such as interviews, analysis, and observation, that the experiences in schools should be reinforced with the help of educators and the good implementation of transmedia narrative in ICT as a learning strategy. Following the line, this study is complemented by research conducted in the country, where they focused on the construction of transmedia worlds, and through a mixed study, it was identified that the nodes fulfill several roles that are consumed in different spaces and contexts where the value of transmedia is appreciated (Altarama & Menacho, 2018).

Prosumers and content

Several authors, such as Yucra et al. (2022), Karbaum (2018), Mateus et al. (2022), Fernández et al. (2020), and Martinez et al. (2018), had the same topic of interest, prosumers and their contents, thus being Peru and Spain where projects of great relevance were shared. Thanks to a collaboration between authors from both countries, it was possible to research the users of 2 mobile games that are characterized by having a greater number of followers, through an exploratory character based on narrative and content analysis, it was shown that the relevance of video games promote users to not only consume them but they are also influenced to be the creators of their content, thus developing the creativity of the player (Yucra et al., 2022), because, it is the prosumer of today, the existence of artifacts facilitates the creation of content, using different narratives that are part of the new communicational environment (Karbaum, 2018) and it is the prosumers who participate in user-user and some user-brand interaction channels to increase the gratifications desired by the organizations (Martinez et al., 2018).

In one publication, it was shown after a series of interviews with influencers that they appreciate the ability to influence people, however, they prefer to be called "content creators" (Mateus et al., 2022). They are the contents elaborated by cyber users divided into two categories according to the level of technical and narrative complexity (Fernandez et al., 2020).

Likewise, it was found that prosumer goods are abundant and it is the most innovative user who is part of the development of value creation (Alderete, 2017). It is the informal strategies that foster user learning with a participatory culture (Morales et al., 2018), and there are gaps in the creation of content for millennials concerning information competencies and quality evaluation (Castillejos, 2019).

Contents in virtual communities

In Spain, this topic has proved to be relevant, thanks to their research. A study based on describing the interactions of a community showed that users do not exchange functional information, but they do exchange content where they mention other members (Cervi, 2019). Likewise, it was evidenced that there are 3 types of fan theories (followers of a theme) that support and prioritize argumentative and creative mechanisms (Amo and García, 2022) and that the audiovisual displayed in the media can be considered texts of powerful and complex cultures (Goyez, 2021). Through a collaboration between Spanish and Italian authors, it was identified that the digital denotes importance in the life of users

as a means to express themselves and relate to other people (Vizcaíno et al., 2022) and that the most active members are the administrators, content moderators and generators of conversations, which shows that they are those who have advanced digital skills and can perform tasks within the virtual community.

In another publication, the role of social networks was validated, obtaining that it is based on experience, position, and level of activity (Fayez et al., 2023) and that, in the virtual world, platforms play an important role in different aspects such as the personal sphere (Redyantanu et al., 2022).

During the literature review process of this project, it was identified that different articles did not have a space dedicated to the results of the research, however, they did include them in a general way in the conclusions.

CONCLUSIONS

1.   To conduct a systematic review on social media storytelling and its prosumers to find scientific evidence in publications in scientific journals indexed between 2016 and 2023, it was concluded that there is still not enough literature regarding the term social media storytelling and the link that relates it to prosumers. The publications prioritize one category or the other. They do not relate to both.

2.   Of the 32 articles reviewed, 5 were based on the perception of Discord as a space for sharing content, i.e., there is an inclination to explore this platform; 11 focused on the narrative in social media, 8 focused on prosumers and content, and another 8 dealt with content in virtual communities. The first point was the one in which most similar positions were identified among the authors, who concluded that Discord is a platform that allows interaction and socialization between users of the same server who may be interested in a specific topic and that this network allows the development of activities that were originally developed in person, such as classroom classes. In the second point, it was observed that the predominant narrative in the researchers' knowledge is the transmedia narrative, which is the beginning of new narratives in social media. With respect to the third and fourth points, more active research on the part of the authors was noted, since it is agreed that most of them immersed themselves in a deep analysis of the narratives and contents of the users, in order to distinguish the precise information for the continuation of their respective researches.

3.   The social media narrative is derived from transmedia narratives, which predominate in media such as film, radio, and television. The term social media narrative arises from the passage of conventional narratives to the cyber medium, where there are new pieces that are well exploited by individuals who have experience in the network and use them to create new content containing this type of narrative.

4.   Based on this review, it is recommended to investigate emphasizing the role of prosumers concerning editing, and revision of the narrative in their contents to direct their performance towards a good use of these. The public trusts the veracity and reliability of what is disseminated.

5.   Research should be done on the prosumer's role not only in Discord, as there are other platforms that evidence communities, to assess the scope of their interaction and the effective collaboration that is promoted among users.

6.   It also emphasized the need to address the issue of social media narrative because it is the preferred way in which content is currently distributed in various social networks impacted by new technologies.

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