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ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA DURING THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC: THE CASE STUDY OF FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM IN PREVENTION OF THE COVID-19

Abstract

The Covid-19 is declared a global threat which is gradually killing millions of people in the world. Its negative impacts are manifested in various sectors. From that situation, this study aims at analyzing the role of social media in prevention of the Covid-19. The social media usage is an opportunity to inform about the Covid-19 impacts to a wider audience. In this research, Facebook and Instagram are particularly analyzed in the light of preventive measures of the Coronavirus. The argument relies on a constructive role of Facebook and Instagram to prevent people from the mechanism of the virus outbreak. This study was conducted through qualitative method approach. This article summarizes the current reports and discussions about the role of social media. Active pages for interaction posts have increased through social media. It is illustrated that effective communication from trusted sources is a better preventive way as the analysis confirms it.

Keywords: Social media, Covid-19, Facebook, Instagram, Global pandemic.

KÜRESEL SALGIN SÜRECİNDE SOSYAL MEDYANIN ROLÜ: KOVİD-19'UN ÖNLENMESİNDE FACEBOOK VE INSTAGRAM VAKA ÇALIŞMASI

Öz

Kovid-19, dünyada milyonlarca insanı yavaş yavaş öldüren küresel bir tehdit olarak ilan edildi. Olumsuz etkileri çeşitli sektörlerde kendini göstermektedir. Bu durumdan hareketle bu çalışma Kovid-19'un önlenmesinde sosyal medyanın rolünü analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Sosyal medya kullanımı, daha geniş bir kitleye Kovid-19 etkileri hakkında bilgi verme noktasında bir fırsattır. Bu çalışmada, Facebook ve Instagram özellikle Coronavirus'un önleyici tedbirleri ışığında analiz edilmiştir. Argüman, insanların virüs salgını mekanizmasından kaçınmaları için Facebook ve Instagram'ın yapıcı bir rolüne dayanıyor. Bu çalışma nitel yöntem yaklaşımı ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu makale sosyal medyanın rolü hakkındaki güncel raporları ve tartışmaları özetlemektedir. Etkileşim gönderileri için etkin sayfalar sosyal medya aracılığıyla arttı. Analizler doğruladığı için güvenilir kaynaklardan etkili iletişimin daha iyi bir yol olduğu açıklanmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Sosyal medya, Kovid-19, Facebook, Instagram, Küresel pandemi.

1. Introduction

The world is actually experiencing the effects of the Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) which is a new strain virus that has not been previously identified. When the Covid-19 was declared as a global crisis by the World Health Organization¹, its contagion is so catastrophic that, according to the actual report, is infecting more than 6,416,828 people and killing more than 382,867 thousand people in the world². From that context, the Covid-19 is the pandemic whose number of cases is increasing in the world. Also, its spread is geographically keeping on graving the entire world in future perspectives. According to the statement of Khan K. Muhammad & K. Ahmed et Al., it is underlined that “This infectious disease and its negative impact in different contexts, and preparedness and response actions will continue to be driven [...]”³. Eventually, the social networks are considered as a ground where most of people could have found alternative solutions about preventing the Covid-19 outbreak.

Furthermore, technology-based online platforms is created towards people of all ages because “The media play an important role in the dissemination of information on the 2019 novel coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic⁴”. It is evident that the Covid-19 is a new disease whose impacts are negative to human health. From that way, social media usage could be one of the better ways to prevent the pandemic from its rapid spread as it is said “The effects of mass

¹www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen [Accessed on 20/05/2020]

²www.covid-19.who.int [Accessed on 04/06/2020]

³Khan Z. Muhammad K. Ahmed A et Al. Coronavirus outbreak: Prevention and Management Recommendations. Drugs. The Perspect. 2020. p.1.

⁴Christian et Al. (2020). The Media and Their Informative Role in the Face of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19): Validation of the Perception and Magnitude of the Issue (MED-COVID-19). Electron Gen.Med.p.2

media are both wide limited. They are wide because it has a vital role in all globalized areas⁵. Thus, social media usage plays a great role to inform about the Covid-19 pandemic.

The response efforts to the pandemic of Covid-19, the World Health Organization have rapidly established the World Health Organization Information Network for Epidemics (EP-WIN)⁶ whose mission is to build an innovative analysis capability to identify misleading sources [...] real-time information has been collated and shared in the public domain during a public health crisis⁷. From that perspective, the EPI-WIN which aims at giving everyone access to timely, accurate and easy to understand advice and information from trusted sources on public health events and outbreaks, social media are currently used to take measures for (a) identifying the key epidemiological transmission features of the Covid-19 pandemic; (b) helping understand spread and severity of the Covid-19 to community groups; (c) informing operational models to implement countermeasures based on cases of contact tracing, social distancing and isolation.

Such a communication system enables social media platforms which are designed to gain earlier understanding of key clinical for epidemiological and virological characteristics of the Covid-19. Social media obviously inform the development of the Covid-19 pandemic by updating public health guidance and the infection is detected from individual country. It also helps managing and reducing the potential spread of impacts of Covid-19 infection to audience.

In that sense, social networks were used to enable people communicating and sharing contents about the Covid-19 prevention. Besides that, this statement depicts that: “Ambey’s post about producing hand sensitizer also garnered the most interactions on Facebook and Instagram⁸”. From that context, this research is conducted by the following questions:

- What is the role of social media interactions during the pandemic of Covid-19?
- Do Facebook and Instagram provide effective communication during the pandemic of the Covid-19?

From these questions, this article attempts to analyze the role of social media during the pandemic of Covid-19 which is considered as a global threat. In addition, within the study framework, this research is carried out through qualitative method approach to analyze data collected from reports online. Therefore, this study aims at:

- Analyzing the role of social media in the light of preventive measures of the pandemic Covid-19;
- Describing effective information applied by Facebook and Instagram during the pandemic of the Covid-19.

Due to the pandemic of the Covid-19, many people have lost their lives; social media particularly Facebook and Instagram have contributed to inform audience about “to take strict measures on community groups about how they can prevent from the pandemic spread⁹”. To

⁵John Tomlinson, (1999), Globalization and Culture, University of Chicago (2nd Ed), p.12.

⁶www.who.int/teams/risk-communication/who-ad-hoc-online-consultation-on-managing-the-covid-19-infodemic

⁷https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200429-sitrep-100-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=bfbf3d1_6 [Accessed 13/05/2020]

⁸www.socialbalkers.com/website/storage/2020/Socialbalkers-COVID-19-Impact-Report.pdf [Accessed 13/05/2020]

⁹Morens, D. M. , Folkers, G.K. , Fauci, A.S. (2009). “What is a Pandemic?”, J Infect Dis 200. pp.1018–102

respond to the pandemic of the Covid-19, the World Health Organization has played a significant role to sensitize community groups how to prevent the Covid-19 contamination.

2. Role of social media during the Covid-19 crisis

Social media considerably play a key role to inform the situation about the Covid-19 outbreak in a larger number of audiences. They are applied for taking appropriate measures to protect. In fact, social media play role as:

- Channel information for the Covid-19;
- Channel prevention for the Covid-19.

2.1. Social media as channel information for the Covid-19

During the outbreak of the Covid-19 crisis, it is emphasized that “Social networks enable people to communicate with their friends and share contents by using their own personal websites¹⁰”. This highlights different ways of using social media platforms in the light of informing public about the Covid-19. It is evident that the Covid-19 makes increase the number of online chats through social media. As it is written by Marcelo M. et Al., it focused that “Today the world is another place. While human lives continue to be lived in local realities, these realities are increasingly being challenged and integrated into larger global networks of relationship¹¹” It is reported that people are interested in turning to social media more often to look for updating news and information about the Covid-19.

This illustrates that social media audience started reacting about the Covid-19 content in the world wide. It also involves brand accounts that were created to express love whose messages were shared to give supports and detail information about the Covid-19. The Covid-19 effects must be informed from trusted sources. According to Socialbakers, it is stated that “As the Coronavirus moved from country to country, one of the biggest single-day was spikes in posts came on march16, and the following day was the peak with more than 11,000 Facebook posts and 3,300 Instagram posts about the pandemic. That, to date, was the single-highest volume day during the crisis¹²”. This demonstrates that 14,300 posts from Facebook and Instagram have been globally used not only for chatting but also for informing one another about the pandemic of Covid-19. The period was so emotional that message contents were more appreciative to what the brands were focusing. Thus, the pandemic drags intended to help one another during the crisis. This was the most interaction on social media posts are related with Covid-19.

2.2. Social media as channel prevention the Covid-19

The World Health Organization Information Network for Epidemics (EP-WIN)¹³ was created on global online consultation to manage the Covid-19 outbreak. Eventually, it has been held to crowd source ideas for avoiding and fighting infodemic whose framework guides the actions of

¹⁰Mayfield, Antony. (2016) .What's Social Media?-i-Crossing-book-e-book www.icrossing.co.uk/fileadmin/uploads/eBooks/What_is_Social_Media_iCrossing_ebook.pdf [Accessed 18/05/2020]

¹¹Marcelo M. et Al. Globalization: Culture and Education in the New Millennium. University of California Press, Los Angeles, USA. 2004.p7.

¹²<https://www.socialbakers.com/website/storage/2020/04/Socialbakers-COVID-19-Impact-Report.pdf> [Accessed 21/05/2020]

¹³www.who.int/teams/risk-communication/who-ad-hoc-online-consultation-on-managing-the-covid-19-infodemic [Accessed 13/05/2020]

governments and public health to prevent the novel Coronavirus. Above all, EPI-WIN aims at warning the concern point about the Covid-19 pandemic. It potentially focuses not only on identifying misleading sources about the Covid-19, but also rising of information voids. Thus, social media give new ways of preventing communication risk of the Covid-19 emergency cases

In addition, the World Health Organization provides artificial intelligence to fill information voids with solid facts that have retrieved from trusted sources. As result, social media prevents the public perception of misleading information which is hidden through harmful rumor on spread posts. To aggregate available social media news, it is evident that search data sets based on the Covid-19 development pandemic in the public health taxonomy were maintained. The data are globally captured to prevent the baseline of analysis through digital consultancy¹⁴. Indeed, to identify the prevalent growth level, it is better to detect the pace shared on networking sites. From that case, “The Facebook posts about Coronavirus that got the most interactions were all from brands announcing steps to either fight Covid-19 or to help employees affected by the pandemic¹⁵”.

Digital communications and social networking have played positive role on impacts of informing societies about the Covid-19. Social media tried to fight against massive misinformation during the Covid-19 through digital media data which identify, understand and categorize the key concerns related to Covid-19. New measures for managing information have been published and shared to different audiences.

3.Methodology

The aim of this study is to analyze the role of social media in the light of preventing the pandemic of the Covid-19. It also describes effective information of Facebook and Instagram during the Covid-19 crisis. Within the scope of the study, qualitative research method was used together. Data were conducted in 4 analysis steps from different sources. The data acquired were descriptively analyzed. Additionally, the framework of this study is followed based on the descriptive process. Therefore, in this discussion, 4 points are discussed through qualitative analysis such as frontiersin website, the brandage website, socialbakers website and RTI website etc.

4. Discussion

4.1. Reflection of Covid-19 on post rates

The Research Topics about Disease (Covid-19) confirmed that “Mass media have long been recognized as powerful forces shaping how we experience the world and ourselves¹⁶”. This statement emphasizes that impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on social media platform are accelerating our lives, behaviors and routines about digital transformation. It is evident that the pandemic of Covid-19 is threatening the entire world. From that situation, media technologies flexibly increase the public’s adherence to safety measures that were proposed by World Health Organization to prevent the spread of the Covid-19. “Social media promote adaptive responses

¹⁴Sohrabi C, Alsafi Z, O'Neill N, Khan M, Kerwan A, Al-Jabir A, et al. (2020). “World Health Organization declares Global Emergency: A review of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)”. *Int J Surg*, pii: S1743 9191(20)30197-7.

¹⁵<https://www.socialbakers.com/website/storage/2020/04/Socialbakers-COVID-19-Impact-Report.pdf> [Accessed 17/05/2020]

¹⁶<https://www.frontiersin.org/research-topics/13638/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-the-impact-and-role-of-mass-media-during-the-pandemic> [Accessed 20/05/2020]

to foster positive attitudes about preventive measures. It is determined that social media shares are playing a great role for Covid-19 protection¹⁷.

Table 1: Illustrating the top sharing countries

Number	Country	Post rates
1	Japan	23.13%
2	America	22.53%
3	South Correa	3.52%
4	Britain	3.33%
5	France	3.15%
6	Brazil	3.10%
7	China	2.97%
8	Malaysia	2.60%
9	Taiwan	2.34%
10	Italy	2.31%
11	Turkey	2.20%

Source: www.thebrandage.com/koronavirus-sosyal-medyya-nasil-yansidi-10410 [Accessed on 18/07/2020]

The report that examines the relationship between social media and Covid-19 has illustrated that from 21/01/2020 to 11/03/2020 many posts were shared through social media. The language publication was expressed in different languages. It is asserted that “the conversation shares of social media users were also analyzed based on impacts of Covid-19¹⁸”. It is obvious that, as the pandemic has become increasingly fearful and panic, social media users started updating the numbers of cases from the official accounts of various institutions which are published by World Health Organization (WHO). Besides, “the data range of social media shares were equally used all over the world. It was reported that over 275 million of social media users were ranged”. When looking at the contents of the shares on social media¹⁹, it is clear that psychological panic that affected social users. This implies the announcement of schools, universities, restaurants due to Covid-19, this situation creates fear, panic and anxiety in social media shares. With the increase of some product sales such as disinfectant products, this is also the most discussed topics and social media agenda²⁰. The most shares were made from Japan, USA and South Correa as it is shown in this table below:

¹⁷Light, R. (2020). What Role Does Collaboration Have in Responding to COVID-19, pp.1-4.

¹⁸www.who.int/who-documents-detail/draft-landscape-of-covid-19-candidates-vaccines [Accessed 31/06/2020]

¹⁹Zarocostas, J. (2020). www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2820%2930461-X. Accessed on 18/07/2020

²⁰Santoanni, D. (2013). “The Social Media Battleground: How Public Perception, Science Communication, Media Coverage, and Politics Are Shaped by Social Media”, p.10.

Table 2: Illustrating the most shares

Number	Country	Sharing number
1	Japan	41,272,779
2	America	37,932,712
3	China	5,581,751
4	Italy	3,597,707

Source: www.thebrandage.com/koronavirus-sosyal-medyaya-nasil-yansidi-10410 [Accessed on 18/07/2020]

4.2. Coronavirus interaction brands through Facebook and Instagram

The state of engagement on social media has been recently participated in both for Facebook and Instagram. In that perspective, it is investigated that media post interactions have increased for worldwide due to the outbreak of Covid-19. According to SocialBakers' report, it is asserted that "The Facebook posts about Coronavirus that got the most interactions were all from brands announcing steps to either fight Covid-19 or to help employees affected by the pandemic"(www.socialbaker.com). It is true that focusing on the Facebook and Instagram, it is true that many are taken into account for preventing the spread of Covid-19²¹. Also, the role of social media during the Covid-19 pandemic is considered as a key concern related to Covid-19 which is expressed by millions of online people²². On the same analysis, it is reported that "some countries saw growth in interactions in Instagram included Japan (10%) and Argentina (2.2%) while Belgium was one the few countries that remained at the same levels. Additionally, in Facebook; Austria (7.7%) and Japan (3.3%) while Ireland and Switzerland remained at the same levels²³", as it is indicate in the below table.

²¹Johansson, L. R. M., & Xiong, N. (2003). "Perception Management: An Emerging Concept For Information Fusion", *Information Fusion*, 4(3). pp.33-34.

²²Power, D. J., & Phillips-Wren, G. (2011). "Impact of Social Media and Web 2.0 on Decision- Making", *Journal of Decision Systems*, 20 (3), p.61.

²³<https://www.socialbakers.com/website/storage/2020/04/Socialbakers-COVID-19-Impact-Report.pdf> [Accessed 17/05/2020]

Table 3: Coronavirus interaction brands announcing steps to fight the Covid-19 pandemic

Facebook brand analysis			
Rank	Hashtags	Profiles	Posts
1	Coronavirus	7,110	18,364
2	Covid-19	6,914	16,395
3	Covid_19	1,654	2,841
4	Corona	1,135	2,841
5	Stay safe	1,266	1,887
6	Covid	1,184	1,887
7	Yomequedoencasa life	873	1,334
8	Quedateencasa	604	953
9	Stay home	602	802
10	Social distancing	556	755
11	Stay at home	499	705
12	Coronavirus outbreak	249	697
13	Quedateencasa life	392	662
14	Health	345	607
15	Virus	339	584
Instagram brand analysis			
Rank	Hashtags	Profiles	Posts
1	Coronavirus	3,315	7464
2	Covid-19	2,674	5,546
3	Covid_19	1,457	2,546
4	Corona	887	1,765
5	Stay safe	707	1,026
6	Covid	543	910
7	Social distancing	424	664
8	Yomequedoencasa	395	652

9	Virus	284	635
10	Health	269	596
11	Stay home	403	569
12	Quedateencasa life	320	530
13	Dirumaja	261	523
14	Stay at home	295	468
15	Stay health	251	373

Source: www.socialbaker.com [accessed on 20/05/2020]

These tables imply what may be the top six most commonly used hashtags related to the pandemic of Covid-19 that were used on both Facebook and Instagram. It is investigated that at the top of the list is “Coronavirus”, “Covid19” and “Covid-19” in both Facebook and Instagram for profiles and posts. Above all, other common hashtags include advice such as “Stayhome” or “Stayathome” as well as more general items like “health” and “virus”. Indeed, SocialBaker data asserted that publication which referred to Covid-19 was obviously emphasized on brand usage on Facebook and Instagram. This is applied while searching for updating news how to prevent from the Covid-19. It is clear that during the social distancing, some applications were established to indicate followers how to deal with the Covid-19 crisis based on its rapid spread. Contamination mechanisms were also explained in details to prevent people from the Covid-19. In the context, the Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic is still producing a global health crisis that has a deep impact on the way that our world is perceived about communicating. The spread rate of contagion and patterns of transmission is endangering both our sense of security and safety measures in our communities. The Covid-19 puts in place psychological constraints based on the spread of the virus which require social distancing and refraining from doing what is inherently human.

Table 4: illustrating Corona virus in US Social Media Mentions and Google Searches

Source: https://www.rti.org/sites/default/files/covid-19_social_media_listening_2.pdf [Accessed on 20/07/2020]

Social media online research behavior generally mirrored mentions of the virus on social media. Google searches peaked on March 12. After a brief dip, they rebounded and then gradually declined along with social media discourse about positive attitudes²⁴. The period from January

²⁴Lerman, K. (2007). "Social Information Processing in Social News Aggregation",

through the end of march 2020. It captured major events in the development and spread of the virus in the US. The trending topics that were widely ranging, and included discussion around. Indeed, rumor and fear pushed people to use social media platforms while being stuck in their homes²⁵. Also, when Covid-19 moved from country to another, brands about Coronavirus were posted to give information to followers. This happened in rapid ways so that people could understand exactly what kind of precautions they should have been taken.

During the outbreak pandemic of Covid-19, the most focused brands talked about Coronavirus crisis. Social media users were interested in posting and sharing how to prevent the pandemic of Covid-19. The statement argues that “a pandemic is defined as the highest level of global health emergency and affecting multiple regions of the world²⁶”. Thus, this is considered as the most terrible panic situation spike characterized the pandemic situation as a realities in the different societies in the worldwide²⁷. Indeed, such a situation is portrayed as the landscape documents that have been prepared by the World Health Organization (WHO) for information purposes only concerning the 2019-2020 as instructing people how to use sanitizers²⁸. These measures, in turn, have been disseminated by various mass media including social media. It seems that the Covid-19 spread was considered as a priority to the World Health Organization. From that context, they set up Information Network for Epidemics (EP-WIN) whose mission is “to build an innovative analysis to identify misleading information from fake sources²⁹”

Table 5: Impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak through social media

Source: It is made by the author based on the data explained in the above details

From that context, various official applications whose aims are to fight against the Covid-19 crisis were established by World Health Organization³⁰. Indeed, Facebook and Instagram are taken into consideration in the current scenario of the Covid-19 pandemic in the context of information analysis. Above all, it was also evaluated that the Covid-19 outbreak resulted much

<https://www.isi.edu/~lerman/papers/lerman07ic.pdf>.

²⁵Surveillances, V. (2020). “The Epidemiological Characteristics Of An Outbreak Of 2019 Novel Coronavirus Diseases (COVID-19)-China, 2020”, China CDC Weekly, 2(8), pp.113-122.

²⁶Ömer Açıkgöz & Aslı Günay. (2020). “The Early impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Global and Turkish Economy”. Turkish Journal of Medical. TÜBİTAK. Ankara, Turkey.p.2.

²⁷Lugo, M. J. M. (2020). “COVID-19 in Post-Truth Societies”, www.caracaschronicles.com/2020/04/16/covid-19-in-post-truth-societies.accessed. Accessed on 19/07/2020.

²⁸Research Topics. Coronavirus Disease Covid-19: (2020). The impact and role of mass media during the pandemic: www.frontiersin.org/research-topics/13638/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-the-impact-and-role-of-mass-media-during-the-pandemic. Accessed on 20/07/2020

²⁹Sohrabi C, Alsafi Z, O'Neill N, Khan M, Kerwan A, Al-Jabir A, et al. (2020). “World Health Organization declares Global Emergency: A review of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)”. Int J Surg, pii: S1743 9191(20)30197-7.

³⁰Rothenbuhler, E. W., & Coman, M. (Eds.). (2005). Media Anthropology, Sage Publications.p.12.

fear not only in public health institutions but also in social lives³¹. Within this context of psychological threat and physical distancing, the Covid-19 creates; through social media channels, rumor and fear which result stress lives on individual societal levels³². The effective informative role of social media in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic can be validated through qualitative method approach. The public authorities of States-Nations have taken the necessary measures to prevent the spread of the Covid-19. The panic situation was strengthened through social media when appropriate number of confirmed cases was globally reported.

5. Conclusion

In this study, social media such as Facebook and Instagram are analyzed to provide opportunities for managing the Covid-19 crisis. The discussions presented in this article argued that Facebook and Instagram play a constructive role to prevent the spread of the pandemic of Covid-19. The research aims at (a) analyzing the role of social media in the light of preventive measures of the pandemic of the Covid-19; (b) describing effective information applied by Facebook and Instagram during the pandemic outbreak. The paper focused on the role of social media based upon informing the key transmission spread of the Covid-19. This is applied to describe operational models to implement the Covid-19 counter measures. Through qualitative method, this research attempts to show increase public's adherence to social media particularly Facebook and Instagram about safety measures to adoptive responses to foster the spread of Covid-19. The data collected have demonstrated interaction growth in Facebook and Instagram about hashtags related to the Covid-19. The main priority might be based upon how to maintain communication operations that give detailed information about Covid-19. In this context, action such as implementation of communicative mechanism to reduce the risk of contamination may play a significant role to prevent the Covid-19. It was finally analyzed that rumor and fear pushed people using social media during the pandemic to be informed about situation result that reduce panic and stress.

With outbreaks of Covid-19 all over the world, the following points are prominent recommendations for social media users and hosts :

- Social media users should pay attention to all misinformation about contamination and spread of the Covid-19 ;
- Social media users should follow the hygienic rules that are officially published in the trusted websites ;
- Social media hosts should provide positive results about information that offer necessary skill measures in the light of the Covid-19 prevention;
- Social media role might be based on developing and implementing emergencies action plan for prevention of Covid-19.

³¹Sajid, S. I. (2016). "Social Media and Its Role in Marketing", Bus Eco J 7: p.203.

³²Stieglitz, S., & Dang-Xuan, L. (2013). "Social Media and Political Communication: A Social Media Analytics Framework", Social Network Analysis And Mining, 3(4), p.291.

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