Election and Hate Speech Campaign in the Print Media: A Case Study of January 19, 2015 Punch Advert

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Abstract

The hallmark of advanced democracies all over the world is free and fair periodic election. The campaign for the 2015 presidential election will go down in as one of the most tension-laden in the political history of Nigeria. The use of Hate speech before, during and after the general election became appalling to an extent that one would think that Nigeria was at war. The paper did an analysis of the January, 19th 2005 advert on *The Punch Newspaper*. The research design adopted was the Content Analysis. The paper discovered that the advert should not have been allowed because it promoted hate speech and was against the ethics of journalism. The study therefore concluded that such advert should not be allowed because it had lot of hate content, which are inimical to democracy. It recommended that the media organisation should make deliberate efforts to rightly inform the people by way of their editorial policy as stated in the constitution.

Key Words: Media, Hate Speech, Election, Campaign and Nigeria
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I. Introduction

The development of modern politics in Nigerian and the world at large can't be complete without mentioning the role of the print and non-print media. It is on record that the first print media (newspaper) in the Federal

Republic of Nigeria, *Iwe Irolin fun awon ti Egba Yoruba* although limited to only South/West region was used as a political tool to fight the colonial administration in Lagos during the struggle for Independence. The Newspaper became so influential that in 1963 the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in England had to caution Townsend over his excesses (Idowu, 2010). This explains why the press is viewed as a very powerful weapon during election as the way a candidate is presented poses a strong influence on the people's opinion towards him and the extent to which the candidate wins their favour.

The mass media can also shape the opinion and attitude of people, especially about their capacity (Foster, 2010). This is because it helps the electorate to make informed choice on the candidate to cast their vote for. The media achieve this in the form of campaigns advert, news stories, write-up by columnists, commentaries, features and interpretative stories by journalists. It is also important to state here that although the media is the major source of information to the populace, over the years it has been accused of involvement in lots of negative electoral campaign. This can be attributed to factors such as ownership, location etc this**.** The traditional media most especially the print media which is supposed to be very objective has therefore become an instrument of spreading hate speech and distorting facts during election.

Election is one of the tenets of democracy all over the world; it is a process that allows individuals in an organisation or society to choose those who will represent them and perform certain duties on their behalf, as it confers power on them. It is also described as representing one of the most modern and universally accepted process through which individuals are chosen to represent a body or community at large (Nnadozie, 2007). It is in the light of the above that experts and political scientists agree that elections is one procedure for aggregating preferences of a particular kind, as it offers choice to the electorate who can choose between two or several alternatives

(Egwu, 2003). However, election in Nigeria and many other developing countries have become a major source of concern for social science scholars, civil societies, policy makers and other stake holders because of their problematic nature.

Since its adoption with the introduction of Hugh Clifford's Constitution in 1922, it has been historically ridden with conflict (Lawal, 2003), as it has become a *Do or Die* thing and a fraud-ridden zero sum struggles for power (Diamond, 1991). Since the Nigeria state got independence in 1960 it has organized and conducted several local, state and national election with many of them being characterized by violence. The violence during these elections can be attributed to a number of factors such as: religious dichotomy, political parties, law enforcement agencies, judiciary lacuna, ethnicity and hate speech campaign which is the focus of this paper (Campbell, 2010; Orji and Uzodi, 2012).

Different definitions have been given by scholars for hate speech. Literarily, it means to any speech or statement which aims to demean another person or which could incite people to violence. Neisser, (1994), defined it as any form of communications that insults a racial, ethnic and political group, whether by suggesting that they are inferior in some respect or by indicating that they are despised or not welcome for any other reasons. Kayambazinthu and Moyo, (2002) conceived hate speeches as wars waged on others by means of word. Essentially, such speeches rob others of their dignity and dehumanized them.

Despites different legal framework that have been put in place to prevent hate speech such as Sections 95 and 96 of the 2010 Electoral Act, Political Party Code of Conduct (2013) and the Abuja Accord (2015) that prohibit the use of any language in campaigns that will hurt tribal, religious and/or section of the country. The phenomenon of hate speech is common in Nigeria as it permeates every nook and cranny of the state. It has also

become an important aspect of electioneering campaign today due to poor regulations that numerous elections related conflicts are credited to it.

Political campaign which is a critical component of election in all democratic society is an organise effort to influence the decision-making process within an environment as it educate the electorate on their manifestoes and provides avenue for the mobilisation of support in order to effect a desired political change. The importance political campaign is that it gives candidate opportunity to educate or sensitise the political community on what they will do if given the opportunity to lead (Lynn, 2009) but in Nigeria it is used by many frivolous politicians to spread hate speeches against their opponent, thereby heating up the polity.

The campaign for the 2015 presidential election will go down in history as one of the most rancorous and tension-laden in the political annals of Nigeria. This is because media outlets failed in their constitutional responsibility and guidelines in being neutral as they allowed their platforms to be used by unscrupulous politicians, whose major goal is to win by all means. This they do by heating up the polity and preach hate in the news, programmes and jingles. The dust raised by the 2011 election which went bloody in some parts and sent fearful ripples across the country had hardly settled during the four year interval. Human Rights Watch, (2011) reported that over 800 people were killed in three days violence in some northern parts of Nigeria.

Many public buildings, police stations, political party offices and churches were destroyed. The orgy was believed to be a response to inciting statements made by the General Mohammadu Buhari, calling on his supporters to "rise and defend their votes". He was also widely reported as threatening "to make Nigeria ungovernable" for his political arch rival, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan of the Peoples' Democratic Party, PDP. Madueke, (2011) attributed the violence to "failure of the media to be discreet in their

reportage of inciting comments … by Buhari and some ethnic interest groups… who kept insisting that power must return to the North."

There was build-up of tension along ethnic, regional, religious or party line, fostered by hate speeches in the media. Echoes of threats started coming from the Niger Delta political stronghold of Goodluck Jonathan not long after his swearing in for the first term in office. People from his region threatened to tear down the country if he was denied the second term, insinuating that denying him was a result of the minority status of his Ijaw ethnic group. In an interview with *The Vanguard (April, 2014)* former national president, *Ijaw Youth Council,* Dr. Chris Ekiyor, said ''The people of the Niger Delta are unanimous in their decision that President Goodluck Jonathan should run for second term. Any attempt to stop him by the North will end Nigeria". Similarly, Prof. Ango Abdullahi of the *Arewa Consultative Forum* was reported to have said that "*The North is determined and insistent that the leadership of this country will rotate to the North in 2015 and I am making that very clear….All of us have this very tough and common agenda"* (*Daily Post*, July 17, 2013).

On the other hand the leader of the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Alhaji Mujahid-Asari Dokubo, taunted the north by saying,

> ''if they contest they are wasting their time. He who pays the piper will dictate the tune. We own them. We are feeding them. They are parasites. A beggar has no choice; they are beggars and parasite" (The Vanguard, 2014).

Scholars have argued that the use of the press and mass media for political campaigns during elections in Nigeria have deviated from the original norm of educating the electorate. This is because instead of politicians educating the people on why they should considers them as better representatives, they engage more in hate speeches and insulting the

personality, ethnic group and religion of their opponent. Hate speech has thus become a trend, and has negatively affected the development of the country's democracy. It is against this background that this paper seeks to do an analysis of the campaign advert on the Punch of January 15th 2015 during the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria. The following research question will be addressed: What are the hate elements in the January 15th Punch advert campaign in the 2015 election? What is the style of presenting the selected hate materials in the 2015 election? What were the Effects of the publication/transmission of hate materials on 2015 election?

I. 2015 Election, the Print Media and Hate Speech Campaign in Nigeria

The phenomenon of hate speech campaign during election in Nigeria has become cord in the wheel of progress in development of democracy in Nigeria and even Africa as numerous election-related conflicts are credited to it. A number of factors are responsible for increase in hate speech campaign in Nigeria and Africa. They are but not limited to poor regulations and weak legal system (Ezeibe, 2016). Ethnicity, religion and the Do or Die nature of Nigeria politics has intensified the use of hate speech. One of the major features of hate speech during electioneering campaign is that it often wears ethnic, tribal, regional, religious or political colouration. The history of hate speech in Nigeria can be traced to the inter-ethnic rivalry during the First Republic and eaten deep into the different fabrics of the Nigerian state.

International organisations, government of different states including that of Nigeria understand the negative effect of hate speech and have made laws to prevent it. Despite legal frameworks put in place both internationally such as Article 10 (2) of the European Convention on Human Rights which states that "the exercise of freedom of expression…may be subject to such formalities**.** The Nigerian sate has also made laws to prevent the use of hate speech. Section 39 and 45 of the 1999 Constitution are supposed to guard

against the use of hate speech. The former (section 45) states that "every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression…" while the later (section 45) states that provides that nothing in section 39 shall invalidate any law that is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society in the interest of public order, public morality and for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedom of other persons. The political elite have continued to use hate speech as a weapon or instrument during electoral campaign in Nigeria.

In 2014 prior to the election the Northern Elder's Forum (NEF) said ''those who vote for Jonathan and the PDP in 2015 will be considered an enemy of the North'' (*Vanguard, 15 October 2014*). This statement clearly divided the nation along regional line and heated up the polity. Governor Shema Ibrahim of Katsina state who is an All Progressive Congress (APC) members and major stakeholder said ''You should not be bordered with cockroaches of politics. Cockroaches are only found in the toilet even at homes, If you see cockroach in your house, Crush them'' *(Premium Times on 19th November, 2014*). This statement was similar to what lead to Rwanda genocide and the eventual killing of over 600,000 Tusti and Twa by the majority Hutus. Similarly, a prominent Islamic cleric, Ima Sadiq Muslims said, ''It is a sin to support a non-Muslim'' (Twitter handle, Saturday, 27th December, 2014). This statement was clearly against the president who is a Christian and likely to introduce religious dimension to the election.

The opposition party All Party Congress (APC) was not the only party guilty of hate speech as the wife of former President, Patience Jonathan who was very vocal and made lots of uncultured remarks during the 2014 presidential campaign. In Calabar the First lady during campaign was reported to have said during our people do not give birth to uncontrollable number of children. Our men don't give birth to children that they dump in streets. We are not like people from that part of the country (apparently the northern Nigeria) (*The Nation March 10th, 2015*). Similarly, the former governor of Oyo state Ayodele Fayose was reported to have die in office if

elected, because former presidents or heads of state like Murtala Muhammed, Sani Abacha and Umaru Yar' Adua, all former heads of state from the North West like Buhari, had died in office (The Punch 19th, 2015).

Arogundade, (2014), stated that one of cause of violence in a democratic society was hate speech and other forms of incitement**.** Hence, there is high expectation from the media to prevent hate speech campaign. As such, media houses are morally expected to be careful of the languages they use in reporting during electoral process; and electoral advert campaign by print media and other forms of media should refrain from doing negative advert campaign. It is therefore important on ethical grounds that any material intended for publication which contained hate element or inciting words should be rejected by media houses in line with section 45 of 1999 constitution, and on ethical ground**.**

The President, Nigerian Guild of Editors, a signatory to the media code for election coverage, Mr. Femi Adesina, who was the Managing Director and Editor-In-Chief of *The Sun* newspaper, adduced owner's political interest as the compelling reason his organisation published Ayo Fayose's advert. He stated that although he knew that that the toned-down version was still bad enough… but Rejecting the advert would have meant trouble from Orji Uzor Kalu, the newspaper's proprietor and founding member of the PDP." In his own review of media performance, Madukwem, (2015) asserts:

> It is worthy of note that some campaigns have been in tandem with specification of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). Others have degenerated into campaigns of blackmail, falsehood, character assassination, distortion of facts and figures and outright deviation from discipline, decorum, decency and tolerance. The essence of all these campaigns which climaxed to conclusion is to market the various candidates.....

From the above, it is clear that the media campaign during the 2015 election portrayed an industry was bent on making money and was at the disposal of the highest bidder. This is against the ethics of journalism (Iredia, 2007). The media projection of hate speech during the 2015 election confirms Isola's concern about media's ability to do "indirect violence" through verbal attacks and negative contents such as gossips, rumour spreading, libel, defamation and character assassination…"(Isola, 2010).Worried by the magnitude of hate speech in the 2015 election, the Senate had attempted to make a law to penalise media that makes itself a purveyor of false or inciting publication. The bill which was aborted after second reading (*Nigerian Tribune*, Dec. 3, 2015) had prescribed a 2-year jail term for individual and a fine of 4 million naira for media house.

II. Materials and Methods

This paper adopted Content analysis, being often used for media research because it is widely considered the most appropriate. Content analysis was adopted so as to align with contextual textual analysis of the selected campaign materials published or transmitted during the 2015 presidential election. The population of this study electoral campaign advert on Print Media while the sample is the Punch 19th, 2015 newspaper advert paid for by Ayodele Fayose. The content of the advert was that if Muhammadu Buhai is elected he will die in office just like other head of states from the north such as Umaru yar'Adua, Sani Abacha, Muritala Muhammed and Tafa Balewa all former heads of state from the Northern part of the country had died in office. The research instrument of the study was carefully chosen to get the best while considering the topic of the study and the research questions. The paper did a Content Analysis using the Thematic areas of campaign content materials in the front page of *The Punch* Newspaper of the 19th January, 2015.

III. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents analyses of the selected hate materials in *The Punch.* The chapter begins with the presentation of the transcribed, followed by the hate material published in *The Punch* newspapers.

Research Question 1: What are the hate elements in the selected campaign materials during the 2015 presidential election?

Analysis

A. *The Punch*, January 19th, 2015



Picture 4.1: Front Page by Ayodele Fayose in *The Punch* on January 19th, 2015.

Established in 1976 by an Accountant, Olu Aboderin, *The Punch* has run as a private business entity. The material selected for this study is a paid advert by the former Ekiti State Governor, Ayodele Fayose, at the peak of the political campaign during the 2015 presidential election. The advert raises an alarm of a looming national tragedy characterised by the death of a president while in office. Alluding to the fact that three heads of Nigerian government, Murtala Mohammed, Sanni Abacha and Musa Yaradua, all

from the North, died while in office, Fayose warned Nigerians that they should not vote for Mohammadu Buhari, because at his age, 72 years, he might suffer the same fate. He hangs a question mark on the neck of Buhari as saying he is the next on the death roll if Nigerians dare to ignore the warning by voting for Buhari.

This advert goes beyond the person of Buhari. Death in this case means Islam, APC and the North. It is a hate generated against Islam, using quotation from the Bible. On the other hand, to choose Goodluck Jonathan, PDP, the South and Christianity is to choose life. In many parts of the world, and especially Nigeria which is potentially divided sectarian lines, such religious inference poses danger of provoking violence. It is designed to denigrate a person, a religion, a political party, a geographical entity that they represent death. The ethnic innuendo is reinforced by the picture of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan in a Yoruba cap, thus joining to the South/West and rest of the south and pitching them against the North. He is beaming smile in contrast to the moody pictures of the dead and Buhari who is expected to be next to die. With such slanting, the media has allied with Fayose, a political figure in the South West, to create "we-they" polarity in Nigeria which is a recurring feature in hate speech and in the precipitation of violence.

The publication sparked divergent opinions and reactions. While the former president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the person of Chief Aremu Olusegun Obasanjo in a Tweet, described the electoral campaign advert by Fayose as a mockery of "our heroes past. He went further to say that the advert was uncalled for and sent his sincere condolences to the people of Ekiti State because they are being led by a senseless and incorrigible governor". Similarly, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) declared that Fayose should be recommended for sanction after his immunity lapses at the end of his tenure as governor as the publication was a clear demonstration of hate speech as violated section 45 of the 1999

Constitution and Section 95(1) and (2) of Electoral Act which says, "A political campaign or slogan shall not be tainted with abusive language directly or indirectly likely to incite religious, ethnic, tribal or sectional feelings".

On the other hand, Adibe, (2015), had a different opinion as he stated that the electoral campaign advert by Fayose Ayodele though offensive, is not a hate speech. He argued that the outraged was because Nigeria is a highly religious state with strong cultural practices, so anything that is suggestive that someone is speculating about the possible death of another person is regarded as being in extremely bad taste. Fayose only wanted to discourage and scare people from voting for Buhari that considering is age and state of health he could die in office as did Murtala Mohammed, Sanni Abacha and Umaru Yaradua.

Question 2: What is the style of presenting the selected hate materials in the 2015 election?

The manner in which a speakers or writer present or says whatever they want to say in either prose or verse expression (Adams and Geoffrey, 2012). Inclusive in style are diction, figurative and nonverbal language, as will be examined in the two selected campaign materials.

B. Fayose's advert in The Punch

i. Tone

It is a shout to Nigerians that danger is looming: "Nigerians, be warned!" The advert in its colour, punctuation, pictures and lettering, is design to create alarm. This was part of the tension the media created around the 2015 election. The impending 2015 election, coming in days after the advert publication, would go beyond casting votes to elect a president among candidates. It was a choice between life and death: "I have set before thee LIFE & DEATH." Voting for a Northerner is to choose a national death. On

the other hand, a vote for a Southerner is life. It is a choice Nigerians would make for themselves and the children. Fayose asserts: "Therefore, choose LIFE that both thee and thy seed may LIVE".

ii. Flashback

It makes a flashback to bring to fore the memory of national recurrent tragedy. It arrays the pictures of Muritala Mohmmed, Sanni Abacha and Musa Yaradua along with the APC Presidential flagbearer, Mohammadu Buhari, warning that voting for him is leap to death by choice: "Will you allow history to repeat itself? *Enough of state Burials".*

iii. Biblical Allusion

The text is quoted from the book of Deuteronomy 30 verse 19: ''I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before You life and Death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

The Biblical quote is a provocation to adherents of other religions, especially since those he is attacking are Muslims. It also denigrates the sacredness of the Bible. It is using the sacred for the mundane, the holy for the dirty. The text was an instruction from God to the Israelites through Moses when they went astray. The pronoun "I" is divine. It was God speaking. Fayose assumes the position of God instructing the mortal Nigerians not to stray to the North, to Islam, to APC and to Buhari because they symbolise death.

iv. Prominence

The placement of the advert tells the story. Front page is the position of the biggest story of the day. The advert is placed in the most prominent place, making the warning a must read.

v. Colour Mix

It has multiple colours of red, black, white, yellow, green to create attraction. Both the colours and the placement affect the cost. The paper, thus, substitutes the stories of the day for money.

vi. Punctuation Marks

The material is punctuated to create effects. Exclamation is to raise alarm. Ellipsis is for suspension of thought. It implies that some information is reserved. It is a means of keeping the reader in curious suspense. Fayose also uses interrogation marks to raise doubt or uncertainty, as hanging on the neck of Buhari.

vii. Use of Pictures

The use of the pictures also creates effects. There are six pictures: three of the dead, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, beaming with smile and life. Buhari is placed between the living and the death, with question mark on him. There is also the picture of *Aso Rock*, symbolising the seat of power and aspiration. The picture is placed at the back of the dead and Buhari, all symbolising the North. While the dead have put *Aso Rock* behind them, the North has to wait till 2019: "NORTHERN PRESIDENCY SHOULD WAIT TILL 2019".

viii. Lettering

The use of upper case (capitals) creates alarm and emphasis Out of the 40-word advert fifteen words are in upper case:
NIGERIANS, BE WARNED! NIGERIA… "I have set before thee
LIFE & DEATH. Therefore, choose LIFE that both thee and thy seed may LIVE."

Will you allow history to repeat itself? Enough of state burials.
NIGERIANS, VOTE WISELY. VOTE GOODLUCK JONATHAN

ix. Slanting

The advert has religious, regional, political and ethnic slanting. This is woven around Buhari on one side of the divide as a Muslim, Northerner, APC member and Hausa-Fulani while Jonathan on the other as a Christian, Southerner, PDP member and Ijaw in Yoruba attire.

Research Question 3: What were the Effects of the publication/transmission of hate materials in 2015 election?

The media portrayal of hate communication in the 2015 election has political, social and ethical effects. The immediate casualty was the media itself. It was badly vilified. Critics blame the media for allowing itself to be used negatively to conduct to conduct hate speech campaign during the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria.

i. **Social Dislocation**

At the social level, the transmission of hate speech created tension. The media was culpable in making the 2015 election one of the most rancorous and tension-soaked in the political history of Nigeria. Attempt to diffuse the tension led to diplomatic shuttle and the eventual signing of peace agreement, popularly christened the "Abuja Accord" among the main political gladiators. The panic created by hate speech and heightened tension through media screaming headlines led to panicky relocation of many people from where they had lived over the years to their own states of origin. This is not without attendant consequences like road accidents, ethnic and religious mistrust, and separation from sources of livelihoods.

ii. Impact on the Outcome of Presidential Election

Politically, the hate communication substantially boomeranged. The ruling PDP attributed its defeat to the hate crusade it embarked upon against Buhari. The National Secretary of PDP, Olisa Metu, says: "The decision of the Presidential Campaign Organisation to adopt and execute a hate

campaign strategy… led to the failure of the PDP." This is the first time in Nigerian political history that the opposition would unseat a president.

iii. Ethno-religious Polarisation

Many incident of hate speech are along religious, ethnic, regional or party lines, the result was the further widening sectarian polarity.

iv. Political Violence

Hate speech became the precursor of many cases of pre-election violence across all the geopolitical zones of Nigeria. Ezeibe (2015:21) reports that "inflammatory utterances of some Northern elites led to the 12th January burning of two campaign buses belonging to the PDP in Jos by the supporters of the APC". In the South-South, where the PDP had greater influence and Dame Jonathan made hate speeches, there was electoral violence before the election. The environment was so charged and violence-laden it became impossible for APC to campaign in Okrika. The translated into the burning of the APC Secretariat in Okrika on January 15, attack on APC campaign by gunmen on January 24, explosion and sporadic gunfire on February17th. Pre-election violence recorded in Lagos, Kaduna, Akwa Ibom, Bauchi and Jos.

A NHRC "Pre-election Report and Advisory on Violence in 2015 General Elections", www.vanguardngr.com/2015/2/58-people-pre-election-violence, downloaded on October 25, 2019) , says within fifty days, beginning from December 2014 to February, 2015, a total of 61 separate incidents of pre- election violence occurred in 22 states, cutting across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria". There were about 58 killings and many more people injured. Ezeibe (2015) cites the network news of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) reporting the following cases:

On January 10, 2015, youths in Jos burnt vehicles belonging to PDP, chanting the pro-Buhari slogans "Sai Buhari", which means "It has to be Buhari".

On January 21, 2015, President Goodluck Jonathan's campaign train was attacked in Katsina state by a mob who chanted "Sai Buhari".

On January 23, 2015 President Jonathan's campaign team was attacked in Bauchi by a similar mob who chanted "Sai Buhari".

The Stimulus –Response theory propounded by B.F. Skinner in 1957 is here validated in view of the tensed atmosphere that pervaded the electioneering period. The same media reported the unintended mass drift of the easterners to their regional base. During the election, the violence and other crises that were reported also provided bases for the theory. However, the different hate speeches did not lead to post election violence as anticipated because the incumbent in the person of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) accepted defeat and handed over power to the opposition represented by Muhammadu Buhari and the All Progressive Congress (APC).

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

The 2015 election has come and gone but the politic dust raised by the different the print media in transmitting hate communication during the 2015 elections. The media which is supposed to rightly the electorate, objective in their report and remain neutral in elections as contained in section 45 of the 1999 Constitution and Section 95(1) and (2) of Electoral Act violated that responsibility by publishing political adverts that sought to create hatred or incite violence. The study therefore recommended that there should be penalty for any media houses which violate section of the constitution or in its responsibility to rightly inform the people. The media houses should not allowed itself to be a commodity for the highest bidder

neither should it allowed it to be use as an instrument of propaganda, ethnic polarisation of those who could pay and serve the interest of owners or those who pay to have their say. Finally, the media should not engage itself in electoral advert campaign that are considered to contained hate speech content as they incite the state into chaos and violence, so the Nigerian Press Council (NPC) should screen any electoral before they are publish.

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