

Women's Empowerment in Nike Advertisements: A Multimodal Analysis

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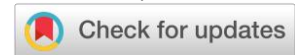
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ABSTRACT

Aside from promoting certain products, advertisements are also utilized to promote social issues. One of the social issues promoted is women's empowerment. This type of advertisement, which promotes women's empowerment, is named as femvertising. In promoting this issue in a video advertisement, the combination of verbal modes and non-verbal modes are used to convey the message. The study examines two recent advertisements by Nike to reveal the message of women's empowerment. The study used multimodal discourse analysis to examine the advertisements which were in the form of moving images, as it tried to uncover the modes present in both advertisements, and how those modes construct the discourse of women's empowerment delivered by the narrators of both advertisements. In exploring the visual modes, Kress and van Leeuwen's framework of visual grammar, which included representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning, was used. The verbal analysis was explored using Hallidayan three layers of metafunction, which included the analysis of transitivity, mood structure, and theme-rheme. The study revealed that the interplay of all the modes that were analyzed put women to be doing sporting activities in sports-related settings, to possess more power than the viewers, as the most salient elements, and to be narrated with encouraging utterances in both advertisements.

ARTICLE HISTORY

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KEYWORDS

Femvertising, Metafunctions, Multimodality, Women's Empowerment

ARTICLE LICENCE

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1. Introduction

The main purpose of why advertisements are used is to promote or sell a certain product or service (Stanton, 1984). Because advertisements are designed to be consumed by the masses, they are broadcasted through a variety of media (Bovee & Arens, 1992). Advertisements, which can be in the form of still image and moving images or video, are present in traditional media such as newspaper and television, and in new media such as social media and websites. With the use of the internet that keeps getting bigger with 4.1 billion people around the world using it (Brantner, 2016), new media is becoming more valuable to businesses than traditional media to promote their products through advertising. In advertising their products in the new media, corporates make a verified account in a certain social media and post their advertisements there. Furthermore, while advertisement is primarily utilized to promote a certain product or service, it can also be used by advertisers to promote ideas (Stanton, 1984) regarding certain issues, with promoting social justice being one of them.

Advertisements can be more than merely to promote a product. It can be utilized by producers that want to take part in doing something for the society's future (Kotler & Sarkar, 2021) to voice out their stance on social justice issues and bring it into the limelight for the masses to consume. This type of practice is called brand activism. Moreover, the stance taken by a corporate is impactful towards their products' sales. Gray (2019) stated that 64 percent of international consumers look at the brand's stance on social issues first before deciding whether to buy from the brand or to boycott the brand.

The social issues being advertised are varied, and one of them is women empowerment. The term femvertising is used to describe this kind of advertisement, which is also synonymous with ad-her-tising. Femvertising can be defined as a type of advertising which uses pro-female talent, messages, and imagery to empower women (Becker-Herby, 2016). Becker-Herby (2016, p. 18) notes that femvertising ensures women as the protagonists in the narrative of the advertisement. This type of advertising is commonly found in sportswear brands, and one of them is Nike. Nike has been raising the issue of gender equality and women empowerment in sports since 1970s (NIKE, 2015).

There are two most recent advertisements regarding women empowerment which were released by Nike within the year 2020 and 2021. The 2020 advertisement is titled *One Day We Won't Need This Day*. This advertisement was released for the purpose of Nike's campaign for International Women's Day 2020, which stars Serena Williams and Megan Rapinoe among the casts (Verry, 2020). The second advertisement is titled *Lose Count*. Released on the month of February 2021 as a part of *Stronger than One* campaign, one of Nike advertisements called *Lose Count* is aimed at empowering women Football athletes, thus it is logical to classify this advertisement as femvertising. *Stronger than One* campaign itself is made for the purpose of empowerment for next generation of women athletes, especially in American football (Codega, 2020). The campaign debuted at 2020's Thanksgiving Day. *Lose Count* itself highlights on female athletes of American or flag football. It features several National Football League's women figures. Hence the issue being raised in the advertisements, the present study focuses on analyzing the non-verbal modes present in the moving images, as well as the verbal modes, which are the speeches uttered by the narrators.

A mode is defined by Kress (2010) as a culturally and socially shaped resource to make meaning. The analysis of these modes in the advertisement is what is called as multimodal discourse analysis. Kress (2012) stated that language, in a multimodal approach, is one means among many available to make meaning, as the meaning of a text as a whole is found through all of the modes in a given text. Kress (2012) went on that analyzing verbal modes – speech or writing – alone will provide only a portion of the meaning. Based on that fact, in hoping to get maximum results, the study tries to focus on both verbal and non-verbal aspects, using the framework of Grammar Visual Design (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006) and Hallidayan three layers of metafunctions (2004).

As a theory that is centered around language function, Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) was proposed by Halliday (2004) which concerns with social context and how language is constrained by it. What Halliday's SFL is trying to make sense is that how language works. SFL is grounded by Saussure's paradigmatic axis in making sense how language works (2004). Halliday has proposed five principles which are able to explain human language's complexity (2003). Those principles are Paradigmatic dimension, Stratification dimension, Metafunctional dimension, Syntagmatic dimension, and Instantiation dimension. In Metafunctional dimension, language shows "functional complementarity." Halliday (2004) proposed that semiotic system is the provider of resources to make three "metafunctions." Those three metafunctions are ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. These three metafunctions are generated in all languages, according to Halliday (2004).

Cameron and Panovic (2014) have elaborated on the SFL's metafunctions. The transitivity of the ideational metafunction reveals that it is concerned with the state of the world. Interpersonal metafunction pertains to the interpersonal relationship between the sender, the message, and the recipient, as demonstrated by the mood structure. Textual metafunction, on the other hand, demonstrates how a message becomes a coherent whole by analyzing the location of the theme and rheme in the clause. These three metafunctions operate simultaneously and sequentially (Haratyan, 2011).

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) made a framework based on Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004) which is used to analyze the metafunctions of non-verbal modes. There are three kinds of meaning drawn from Hallidayan metafunctions. The first one is representational meaning, which is based on ideational metafunction. The second is interactive meaning, which is based on interpersonal metafunction. The last one is compositional meaning, which is based on textual metafunction.

Representational meaning or structures deal with how represented participants in a given image interact with each other, which is realized by vectors aimed by them (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). When the vectors are aimed by the participants' action or gesture, then it is explained as action process. While, when the vectors are aimed only by the participants' eye line, then it is recognized as reactional process. Then, the process is said to be happened in a circumstance. There are three kinds of circumstance: Locative Circumstance, Circumstance of Means, and Circumstance of Accompaniment.

Interactive meaning deals with the relationship between the represented participants inside the image and the viewers (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006, p. 115), and it is realized by four sub-processes: contact, social distance, attitude, and modality. Contact is realized by the participants' gaze, which is divided into demand for direct gaze and offer for indirect gaze (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). Social distance is the way the advertisement depicts the represented participants through how they are pictured by the size of frame (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). Attitude is made sense through the angle taken by the shot. Vertically, it depicts the power relations between the participants and the viewers (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). Horizontally, it realizes the sense of attachment or detachment of the scene (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). Modality, in linguistics, refers to the truth value of linguistically realized statements about the world (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006, p. 154).

This concept can be applied in visual communication, as visual can represent things. Modality, in visual mode, is represented by modality markers. It may be realized by the color differentiation, color modulation, or the contextualization of the image.

Compositional meaning connects both previous meaning's elements in constructing the modes into a coherent whole (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). In a multimodal text, the compositional features are connected to the principles of layout (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). Composition connects representational and interactive meanings through 3 intertwined systems. Information value suggests that placement of elements in certain positions may convey specific information (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). Saliency realizes the degree of importance among the elements (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006), and it is realized through sharpness of focus, color and tonal contrast, size, placement in the visual field, perspective, and the presence of human figure or a cultural symbol. Framing has to do with the degrees of boundedness or connectedness represented by an actual frame or frame lines around elements in a visual text (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006).

Several studies have been conducted to analyze advertisements in the field of linguistics, especially in Multimodal Analysis. One study (Firmansyah et al., 2019) revealed Nike's racial hegemony in its advertisement video, through Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1989) and Multimodal Analysis (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). Two studies analyzed how advertisements portray the two genders in certain scenarios (Saz-Rubio, 2018; Tehseem et al., 2019). Another study explored on women empowerment discourse in two beauty advertisements (Xu & Tan, 2020). The previous studies mentioned share a similarity with the current study by using Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework. However, multimodal analysis of sports advertisement regarding women's empowerment has been minimally explored. The study would like to know what the multimodal elements of the advertisements are, and how the multimodal elements construct the discourse of women empowerment of the advertisement.

2. Method

The current study employed the qualitative approach, as it was a discourse analysis of video advertisements, and it was intended to gain a deep understanding of the advertisements' discourse. Dornyei (2007) stated that images (photos and videos) are included as data that can be approached qualitatively. In this study, the advertisements were Nike's in the form of video, or moving images. The sources of data were taken from the internet, especially from Nike's official page in YouTube to ensure their originality. It would be too broad for this study to research on all Nike's women empowering advertisements. Thus, two Nike advertisement videos were the choices of data sources to be analyzed, as they are two of the most recent ones released by Nike. The two videos concern about women empowerment in sports and were released in 2020 and 2021. Those videos are titled *We Won't Need This Day* and *Lose Count*. The data were the modes present in the advertisements. As this is a multimodal analysis, the data were not only written and spoken language, but also the other modes.

The first step taken was to download the sources of data, the video advertisements, from Nike's official page on YouTube. The data collection technique used was content analysis by the way of transcribing. After obtaining the videos, the modes which appear in the videos were transcribed in multimodality transcription. The data that were transcribed, according to Domingo (2011), are spoken and written language, gesture, landscape, visual effects, sound effects, and color. After collecting the data, the analysis of the findings was the next step.

The analysis followed the metafunctions framework by Halliday (2004), which influenced Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) meanings in visual grammar. Firstly, the representational meaning of the advertisements were analyzed to find what type of process happens in each scene between the represented participants (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). The analysis of interactive meaning of both advertisements came next. This is to reveal the relationship between the sender, the addressee, and the message. The analysis was done to each scene's contact, social distance, attitude, and modality. The compositional meaning came last, and it was about the analysis of compositional features of the advertisements, which connects the previous two meanings together (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). The analysis was done to the information value, saliency and framing of the elements in the advertisements. After the analysis of the visual aspects were done, the verbal analysis was done using Hallidayan SFL (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004). Three layers of functions of the verbal modes in the advertisements were examined. After getting all the analysis based on the meanings as explained above, the findings are interpreted. To make the analysis effective, the analysis is done to only several representative scenes of both advertisements.

3. Result and Discussion

In this section, the data, which were taken from the two videos as the sources of data, are presented and analyzed. The visual analysis were done following the three layers of meaning of visual grammar (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). After that, the verbal modes were analyzed using Hallidayan framework of SFL (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004) is presented

3.1. Non-Verbal Modes

a. Representational Meaning

The first meaning is the representational meaning. This meaning deals with how represented participants in a given image interact with each other, which is realized by vectors aimed by them (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). The explored representational meaning is the narrative processes happen on both advertisements. Narrative processes can be divided into two: action and reactional processes. Action process happens when the vector is aimed by the actor's action, while reactional happens when the vector is aimed by the reactor's eye line (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). It also needs to be addressed that the represented participants of both advertisements are all women.

Action processes are found in both transactional and nontransactional advertisements. The action processes occurring in both adverts feature women engaging in sports-related activities. The first commercial on video depicts the actors aiming their vectors by punching, running in place, playing tennis, and carrying a ball. The second promotional video likewise features the actors participating in a sporting activity. The second advertising, however, focuses on American football rather than other sports. In the action processes of the second advertising, the vectors are targeted by throwing a football, blocking an opponent, and rushing to the goal line.



Figure 1. Women as the actors

There are also instances of reactional processes present in both advertisements. The vectors, in this process, are aimed only through the reactors' eye line (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). In the first advertisement, the reactional processes happen in non-transactional way, which means there is no visible phenomenon in each scene presenting this process. In the second advertisement, the reactional processes also happen in transactional which also shows the phenomenon. One highlighted example in the second video presents male participants as the reactors, watching the female actors, as the phenomenon in reactional process, engaging in a football match. This puts the women as the doer, performing executive role, and puts the men as the admirers of the action, where commonly it is the opposite (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006).



Figure 2. Men as the reactors

The circumstance also plays an important role in portraying the represented participants. In both advertisements, Nike is consistent in placing the participants, women, in sports-related setting. This emphasizes the discourse of women empowerment trying to be delivered by Nike.

b. Interactive Meaning

The interactive meaning is addressed, in this passage, and it deals with contact, the social distance, attitude, and the modality. Contact is realized by the participants' gaze. An image is regarded as offer information when indirect gaze occurs (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). In this sense, the participants inside the scene are presented, or 'offered', to the viewers as a unit of information (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). Indirect gazes present in both advertisements. Usually, indirect gazes happen when the representational meaning shows action process, making the action shown as a unit of information to the viewers. This seems to show that women are able to engage in sports activities, and Nike tries to show them as an information to the viewers.

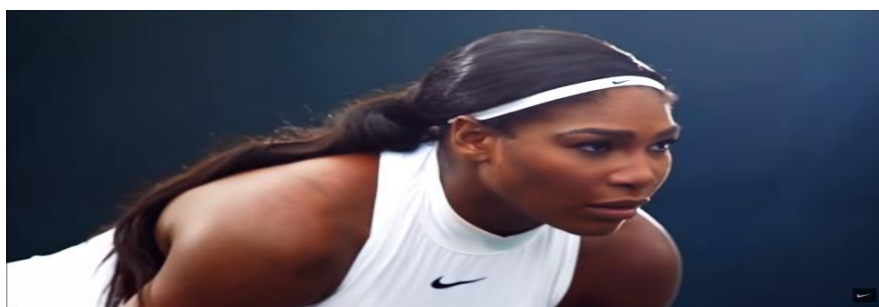


Figure 3. Indirect gaze

Direct gazes also present in both advertisements, and they function to 'demand' to the viewers (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). From all the direct gazes in the scene, the represented participants use serious facial gestures in addressing the viewers. With serious faces, the participants seem to address to the viewers that women are not to be taken lightly in sports and demand them to listen to the speeches delivered by the narrator.



Figure 4. Direct gaze

The social distance deals with how the intimacy between the represented participants and the viewers are maintained, made sense through the distance and the size of frame in which the shot is taken (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). Figure 3 is an instance of close-up shot. It realized the intimate relationship that the participant tries to establish with the viewers. Figure 4 is an instance of medium shot which intention is to establish impersonal relationship with the viewers. A long shot is a distance where both the participants and the viewers are strangers (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). From the two advertisement videos, the social distance that is reoccurring the most is the medium shot distance.

Attitude is realized by the angle from where the shot is taken, horizontally or vertically. In horizontal axis, there are two realizations: detachment and attachment. Detachment is realized when the participant is shot from an oblique angle (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). The second advertisement uses oblique angle more often than the first advertisement. The advertisement makes the viewers feel detached in this angle. The frontal angle, however, is the opposite. It realizes the sense of attachment to the viewers. The first advertisement uses frontal angle more often than the second advertisement.

In vertical axis, the realizations are divided into three: low angle, eye-level, and high angle. Both advertisements do not employ high angles as none could be found. High angle realizes the viewers to be more powerful than the participants (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). As both advertisements try to empower women, the advertisements do not portray them to look

less powerful than the viewers. Moreover, eye-level shots and low angle shots are employed instead. Eye-level realizes the power relations to be equal, while low angle portrays the participants to be more powerful. The first advertisement presents low angle shots more, while the second advertisement presents eye-level shots more.

Modality is realized by the color differentiation, color modulation, or the contextualization of the image (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). These realizations are the factors that determine whether an image has a high or low modality. The majority of sceneries or photos are created with a high degree of realism. The majority of the photographs are presented in rich, modulated, and varied hues, with heavily contextualized backdrops. Nonetheless, there are a few cases in which graphics are produced in low mode. Some segments in the first advertising are displayed in black and white, demonstrating low modality. One segment is also rendered in monochrome color. In contrast, the second advertising does not typically employ low modality in its scenarios.



Figure 5. Low modality

The circumstance also plays an important role in portraying the represented participants. In both advertisements, Nike is consistent in placing the participants, women, in sports-related setting. This emphasizes the discourse of women empowerment trying to be delivered by Nike.

c. Compositional Meaning

The meaning of composition in visual grammar is realized through three realizations: information value, salience, and framing. Central-margin placement of elements is the most reoccurring information value in both Nike's advertisements in this study. The first advertisement tends to present each image with only one element. However, there are some instances, as Figure 5, which presents multiple participants. The second advertisement tends to have more than one element in each scene. When this happens, the women figures are always positioned in the central. Central position indicates the element placed in it as the nucleus of information, while the margin presents as the dependent information to the central (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). Central position is always the most salient part of an image (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). In this sense, the women figures placed at the central position is the most salient part in each scene. In terms of framing, the first advertising mostly presents the participants in isolation from the other participants, as they are displayed in future shots. While the second advertising employs multiple elements in each picture, creating a sense of connection between each graphic piece.



Figure 6. Information value of central-margin placement

3.2 Verbal Modes

After analysing the non-verbal aspects, it is also important to explore on the verbal modes of both advertisements. The verbal modes' three metafunctions are analysed using Halliday's (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004) transitivity for the

ideational metafunction, mood structure for the interpersonal metafunction, and theme analysis for the textual metafunction.

a. Verbal Modes Analysis of *One Day, We Won't Need This Day*

The table below shows the transitivity processes present in the first advertisement which are uttered by a woman narrator.

Table 1. Transitivity Processes of *One Day, We Won't Need This Day*

Process	Frequency
Mental	6
Relational	1
Total	7

Examples of some of the utterances found in the first advertisement can be seen down below:

- 1) "One day, we won't need this day."
- 2) "We won't need a day to celebrate how far we've come."
- 3) "Because one day, this day will be our everyday."

In terms of ideational metafunction, from the analysis of each clause seen through transitivity, it was gathered that six utterances happen in mental process, with the use of the mental verb 'need' in each of them. However, the last statement, shown in point c, was uttered by the narrator with relational process, with the use of copula verb 'will be'.

The interpersonal metafunction, shown through mood structure analysis, shows all clauses in the first advertisement in declarative mood. The function of declarative mood is to 'offer' information to the hearer (Halliday and Matthiesen 2004; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). In this sense, the main idea of the advertisement is solely to give information to the viewers regarding gender equality in sports. It can be seen from the examples given above that all the sentences have nouns to fill the subject position, making it to be a declarative sentence as opposed to imperative.

Regarding the theme, the advertisement consistently uses the term "we," which alludes to women, as the theme. In the final utterance, as evidenced by point c, the subject shifts from the pronoun "we" to the phrasal noun "today," which occupies the subject position of the sentence. The narrator states that the day referred to in the advertisement as "today" will be their daily routine. International Women's Day was acknowledged in the context of when the advertising was originally broadcast.

b. Verbal Modes Analysis of *Lose Count*

The table below shows the transitivity processes present in the second advertisement which are uttered by a woman narrator.

Table 2. Transitivity Processes of *Lose Count*

Process	Frequency
Material	9
Relational	5
Existential	6
Mental	2
Total	22

Examples of some of the utterances found in the second advertisement can be seen below:

- a. "Because, we make football better."
- b. "We are the hardest workers you have ever met."
- c. "We are here to steal your trophy."
- d. "We don't need empowering anthems anymore."

Meanwhile, the second advertisement's verbal modes are presented above. In terms of ideational metafunction, there are material, relational, existential, and mental processes, compared to only two processes present in the first video.

The material processes were uttered the most in the advertisement. This process makes the subject as the actor with the use of action verbs, for example 'make' in point a above. The deployment of relational processes also presented five times, by the use of copula verbs. One of the examples can be seen in point b with the use of the copula verb 'are' to define the subject as '*hardest workers*'. Existential processes occurred six times in the advertisement. One of the examples can be seen in point c where the narrator pointed out that the subject existed in a circumstance that indicated 'here'. Lastly, mental processes only occurred twice, with the use of mental verb like 'need' as shown in point d.

In interpersonal metafunction, aside from declarative mood, it was also found that the second advertisement also deployed imperative mood, which realizes the utterance to be 'command' (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). In this sense, the advertisement does not only offer information, but also command the viewers through three verbs: go, sing, and do. There are four occurrences of imperative mood which can be seen below:

- a. "So, go ahead."
- b. "Sing our praises."
- c. "But do it for this."
- d. "Do it"

Seen from the examples a-d above, the topical theme of each clause was dominated by the pronoun we, which refers to the women, similar to the first advertisement. However, there are other themes, such as verbs in the imperative sentences, as seen in examples e-h.

4. Conclusion

The present study is a multimodal discourse analysis of two advertisements made by Nike. The two advertisements chosen were in the forms of moving images or videos, and were exactly chosen as both contain discourse about women's empowerment, which can be classified as femvertising (Becker-Herby, 2016). The first video is titled *One Day, We Won't Need This day*, and was released in March 2020. Lose Count is the title of the second video, which was published in February 2021. Nike released the two adverts, although they were part of separate campaigns. As a multimodal analysis, the study sought to determine what modes are present in Nike's two advertising and how the company produced messages of women's empowerment utilizing those modes. Participants in narrative processes, their gazes, the narrator's words, camera position, and social distance are found in both adverts.

The investigation began with the visual aspects. The visual analysis was conducted utilizing Kress and van Leeuwen's concept of visual grammar (2006). The representational significance of both adverts was achieved through the casting of women as scene players. In both adverts, the performers are depicted engaging in sports-related activities. The most significant factor is the setting in which the performers were portrayed. In both adverts, Nike consistently portrays women in sports-related scenarios. In terms of interactive meaning, both adverts feature serious-faced participants with direct gazes. There are indirect gazes when participants are engaged in action activities. Long and medium distances were most frequently employed in both advertising, whereas close-up was only used sparingly. The first advertising includes more frontal shots than the second in terms of attitude. However, the second advertising incorporates a greater number of oblique shots than the first. Moreover, both adverts depict the individuals using just low and eye-level shots. The majority of sceneries or photos are created with a high degree of realism. The majority of the photographs are presented in rich, modulated, and varied hues, with heavily contextualized backdrops. In terms of compositional significance, the first advertisement predominantly depicts participants as the sole element in each frame, whereas the second campaign predominantly employs many visual elements in each scene. The recurring information value is arranged with a central margin. Women are the most prominent participants in both advertising' scenes.

In terms of verbal modes, the analysis was done in three layers of metafunctions in each of the clauses present in both advertisements. In the ideational metafunctions, the processes present in the first video include mental and relational processes, while the second video includes material, existential, relational, and mental processes. In the interpersonal metafunction, the clauses present in the first video were only in declarative mood, while the second video has declarative and imperative moods. In the textual metafunction, the placement of theme was dominated by the subject 'we', which referred to the women. The interplay between the visual modes and the verbal modes, as explained above which presented women as the protagonist, constructed the discourse of women's empowerment.

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