INFLUENCE OF GENDER LEADERSHIP ON THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN ON TELEVISION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Television is a potent and pervasive medium, which not only mirrors, but also shapes the human society. While several moral and intellectual judgments have been passed on its almost one century of eventful existence, television's compelling societal impact cannot be wished away. Television, which along with other mass media forms, plays the role of a social institution, has however been found culpable in promoting the rather unhealthy and disturbing trend of misrepresentation, underreporting and negative portrayal of the female gender. This trend not only raises moral questions about the appropriateness of some television contents, but also raises concerns on its implication on social order. As there is a preponderance of male heads, owners and leaders of television stations in Nigeria, the emerging trajectory whereby a handful of women now own or head some television stations in the country creates room for comparative analysis of television gender leadership roles. The aim of this study is to find out if these female television station leaders are exerting any influence along the line of reconstructing the narratives around the burning issues of negative female portrayals.

Keywords: Nigeria, Television, Female, Gender, Portrayal, Stereotype, Broadcast.

Introduction

When John Baird, one of the inventors of the disc scanning system which made television possible, demonstrated his invention at Selfridge's department store in London on 27 January 1926, many thought the new invention would be useful only in delivering programmes at theatres. The general opinion at the time was that television would enhance the entertainment values of theatres (Marshall, 1986). No one thought that less than a century later, the cathode ray tube would become essential in several homes, become a must-have for families that could afford it and become the third most time-consuming activity in life, exceeded only by sleeping and working (Dunnett, 1990). Few human inventions have as strong effects as television has had on individuals and on contemporary human society (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). The growth of television was so phenomenal and exponential that by 1970, the number of households that had television sets was put at 80 million from the few thousands recorded in 1947 (Stephens, 2000). By 2015, however, the number has grown astronomically to 1.57 billion households and 1.59 households in 2016. This number is projected to hit 1.68 billion by 2021 (Statista, 2017). The implication of these numbers is that despite the increasing popularity of the new media, television will continue to remain relevant in human society for some time to come.

To further buttress this, the past two decades has witnessed dramatic changes in the economic fortunes of the television industry with not just the number of television sets in households increasing, but also with an exponential growth in the number of television channels and increase in television revenues (Jin, 2007). The world is also witnessing increased inter-connectivity in the television industry (Waisbord, 2004). Television signals have also developed from terrestrial to digital. Digital signals allow users to receive several hundreds of television stations on their sets. With advancements in digital technology, it became possible by 1998 to receive television signals online on a computer, thus enhancing the reach and portability of television.

Television, as a media and communication institution, plays the role of a social institution in the society. Social institutions are human systems that define behaviors and relationships permissible between persons in a given society. Social institutions govern the conducts of the members of a society even as they confer benefits and privileges on them. Palispis (1996) emphasizes the purposive nature of social institutions, arguing that these human systems set out to satisfy the basic needs of their members. In addition to meeting the basic needs of members, social institutions define dominant social values, control behavior, define the roles of individual members of the society and support one another. Television fits well into this mold through the provision of basic needs (information), definition of dominant social values (agenda setting) and creation of behavior pattern (influencing and modeling).

Television, like social institutions are wont to do, also supports other social institutions. For instance, television is a major vehicle through which governments communicate with the citizenry; families depend on television for news, entertainment and education; while businesses connect with their various publics through television. Television also supports religious activities as the Christian gospel, the doctrines of Islam as well as the virtues and

morals of Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and other popular world doctrines/religions daily enjoy significant airtimes on television.

As an important mass medium of education, information and entertainment, television is a potent source of socialization capable of cultivating its own worldview among the people (Gunter, 1995). While new media forms spring up every now and then, the mass appeal of television across the globe shows no sign of waning (Zillmann & Bryant, 2002). As strong a medium as it is, the potency of television has however been the subject of abuse as it has been used to promote gender roles, gender misrepresentation and underrepresentation (Tuggle, 2009).

Conceptual Framework

The modern human society has become highly mediatized (Hjarvard, 2008; Lileker, 2008). The implication of this mediatization is that the society as we know it today is at the mercy of the media and media content. The mass media has evolved past the stage of mediation in societal affairs to the level of shaping and framing human processes and discourse. It further implies that the tendency for people to believe what they hear, read or see on television and other mass media as correct reflection of the truth is high. According to Bourdieu (2011), while television claims to report reality, it in actual fact creates its own reality. The intense competition for viewership and revenue has driven television stations over the top leading to dramatization and exaggeration of social phenomenon and construction of events in commercially beneficial ways. Media creations, irrespective of how advantageous or detrimental they could be to the society, could in no time become realities. Female gender stereotype is a major issue in the society today and the mass media, the television especially, shares the blame for promoting stereotypes through the way the female gender is portrayed in broadcast contents (Koivula, 1999).

Lindburg (2014) blames the mass media, including television, for "misreporting, exaggerations, examples of behavior out of context, and over generalizations" of the female gender, all of which have contributed to the stereotypes prevalent in the society. Stereotypes created by mass media portrayals last longer than can possibly be imagined. According to Lindburg (2014), certain female gender views created in the 1970s persist to the present times and are even are continuously reinforced.

Female gender stereotypes threaten the society (Steele & Aronson, 1995). They could lead to societal disorder as has been seen with series of protests by feminist groups. Some of those protests could threaten the moral fabrics of the society as can be seen with the tactics adopted by the Ukranian-French radical feminine group known as Femen, whose members go topless, exposing their sensual upper torso in public places such as parks, embassies, mosques and churches (Wilson, 2012). A topless protest by the group at the Vatican sparked public outrage especially among the Catholic community and almost degenerated into violence (Whitmore, 2011). Placing a label on people can also be annoying and harmful. For instance, Nigerian films, which are regularly shown on Nigerian television stations, limit "the representation of women to passive and subordinate housewives" (Azeez, 2010). The films, which portray a

patriarchal society in which the female gender is objectified, also label women as witches, wicked, evil, fetish, weak, vindictive and unfaithful (Ogunleye, 2003). These films are shown regularly on Nigerian television stations and since women are the dominant viewers (Azeez, 2013), the psychological impact on women of impressionable age could be devastating (Okunna, n.d.) It is also harmful to the society to have men hold negative perception of the female gender. Stereotypes have equally been found to adversely affect the performance of female students in mathematics (Spencer, 1999), a claim reinforced among Latino students in a study conducted by Guyll, Madon, Prieto and Scherr (2010). In addition to this, Gerbner and Signorielli (1979) established that stereotyping women restricts their career opportunities, makes them vulnerable to social ills and violence as well as affect their overall worldview.

Apart from stereotyping and negative portrayals, the female gender is also underreported on television. For example, a study by Tuggle (2009) finds that television stations devote far less airtime to covering and discussing women sports than they do their male counterparts. Koivula (1999) posits that female sports athletes receive the short end of the stick in televised sports reporting both in quality and in quantity, with less than 10% of the total examined sports news time devoted to coverage of news concerning female athletes. Since female underreporting is a form of gender bias, implying discrimination, inequality and marginalization of a certain section of the human society, it could also create social upheavals with grievous implication on peaceful coexistence and societal order.

Female stereotyping has been found to be prevalent in Nigeria with many Nigerian men fingered as culprits (Nettikkara, 2015). If Nigerian men are generally complicit in stereotyping and negative portrayal of the female gender, the male dominated television industry may not care about curtailing this social issue.

Theoretical Framework

George Gerbner's cultivation theory aptly captures the power of television. According to Gerbner, the more time people spend watching television, the more likely they believe the social realities constructed by television (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Gerbner argues that people consume television for about seven hours a day, thus it has gradually crept into their lives and exerts significance influence on them. Gerbner and Gross (1976) argue that the power of television is derived from its visual and auditory nature, which does not require consumers of television contents to be literate. This makes television products easy comprehend and consume by people of diverse background. Another advantage television has over other mass media, according to the duo, is its ability to use storytelling or engaging narratives to capture attention (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). Gerbner and Gross posit that television has become the "central cultural arm" of the human society.

According to Shanahan and Morgan (1999), George Gerbner's theory, along with several other empirical studies conducted years after the theory was postulated, shows that "massive attention to television results in a slow, steady and cumulative internalization of aspects" of the messages dished out by television. In effect therefore, people tend to believe what they

see on television. If women are constantly portrayed in certain negative ways on television, this portrayal has the tendency of becoming the new normal for many, especially children and young adult of impressionable age.

The gender schema theory, originally propounded by Sandra Bem in 1981, also provides a succinct framework for rationalization of men-led television stations' seeming unconcern and nonchalant disposition towards curtailing negative female portrayals and underreporting. The gender schema theory provides a cognitive account of the process of sex-typing; positing that gender bias is formed based on society's ubiquitous insistence on the functional importance of dichotomy between the male and female gender (Bem, 1981).

Bem (1981) argues that sex typing results from societal impositions and are influenced by child rearing, media, school, and other forms of cultural transmission. She identified four distinct categories into which individuals can belong. These are sex-typed, cross-sex-typed, androgynous, and undifferentiated. Sex-typed individuals, according to the theory, process and integrate information that is in line with their gender, cross-sex-typed individuals process and integrate information that is in line with the opposite gender, androgynous individuals process and integrate traits and information from both genders, while undifferentiated individuals do not show efficient processing of sex-typed information. The theory explains that sex-typed persons have the tendency of encoding and organizing the information they receive in terms of a gender schema, "using the traditional bipolar masculinity/femininity dimension as the organizing principle", while non-sex-typed individuals are more likely to use other dimensions that are not related to gender to organize information and are thus less likely than sex-typed individuals to engage in gender-schematic processing (Schmitt, Leclerc, & Dubé-Rioux, 1988).

A major fallout of Bem's work is the development of the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) to measure masculinity-femininity and gender roles of individuals. The BSRI became a tool used by psychologists to measure androgyny in human beings and provide empirical evidence to show the advantage of a shared masculine and feminine personality versus a sex-typed categorization. The test is performed based on 60 personality traits in individuals who are rated on a 7-point Likert scale. The traits are evenly distributed with 60 being masculine traits, 20 feminine and 20 filler traits believed to be gender neutral.

Gender schema theory proffers insight into how gender stereotypes have become deep-seated in the human society. It explains that sex-typing develops in individuals a young age and become reinforced through by the society through the regulation of behaviours that conform to the cultural definition of masculinity and feminism. Bem (1983) traces the development of sex-typed individuals on child rearing practices of parents and on exposure to the mass media. Bem posits restriction of access to the media that promotes sex-typing, to create more androgynous views in people. This suggestion could have limited success though because the mass media has become pervasive in and television broadcasts are no longer restricted to the cathode ray tubes but are also continuously streamed online, so even when children are restricted from watching certain television contents, the tendency of their becoming exposed

to it becomes higher as they associate with other society members. Perhaps a potent way of reducing sex typing, which promotes stereotyping, will be to regulate how women are portrayed on television. This study assumes that female leadership of television stations is able to regulate contents that portray women negatively and which promote female stereotypes.

Methodology

This study was carried out using comparative analysis of the broadcast content of two television stations in Nigeria. The television stations are Silverbird TV and EbonyLife TV.

Silverbird TV is a top entertainment television station in Nigeria, providing its viewers up to date news, sports and entertainment programmes (Silverbird Television, 2014). The television station dedicates premium airtime to life issues, movies, relationships, religion, health, food, entertainment and sports. Silverbird is widely viewed across Nigeria on DSTV Channel 152. It also streams its programmes online. Silverbird TV, founded in 2003, is owned by Ben Murray Bruce – a male Nigerian politician (Amadi & Sowoolu, 2010). The Silverbird Group, which is the holding company of Silverbird Television, has Mr. Guy Murray-Bruce as President, while Mr. Bola Salako is the General Manager of Silverbird Television. In essence, the station is male led.

EbonyLife TV prides itself as "Africa's first Global Black Entertainment and Lifestyle network". It commenced full broadcast on 1st July 2013 on DSTV platform.

Channel 165 in Nigeria; its contents are also distributed through DSTV to 49 African countries, including South Africa and Southern African countries (EbonyLife TV, 2017). EbonyLife TV is owned by a Mo Abudu who serves as its Chairman and Chief Executive while Heidi Uys, Sandra Amadio and Quinty Pillay serve as Head of Programming, Director of Entertainment Programming and Director of Scripted Programming respectively. All these persons are women who have spent between 15 and 28 years in the television industry (EbonyLife TV, 2017). It therefore implies that EbonyLife TV is a female led television station.

Silverbird Television and EbonyLife TV were chosen for this study because of the need to compare a male-led television station and a female-led television station which they respectively represent. The two stations also have somewhat similar orientation and they focus on current affairs and entertainment. They also both appeal to the young and young at heart, are privately owned and reach their viewers through DSTV, in addition to having online presence.

The programming and broadcasts of the two television stations were monitored on Wednesday 28th and Thursday 29th June 2017 for 12 hours each – 7am to 7pm. These contents were then analysed with a view to identifying coverage of women issues and portrayal of the feminine gender.

Silverbird Television's programmes analysed in the two days of monitoring were News, Today on STV, Politiscope, Muhammadu Buhari's Mid-Term, Sports Café, E-News Roundup, Nolly Fiesta, Connect 360, Music Africa, Documentary, Boom Town, EOM Business Network, Vibe Café, Nickelodeon, In My Closet, MTV Base, Almond Finance, Family Ties, Papa Ajasco, Turtle Taido, Nnena and Friends, and Family Heritage.

EbonyLife TV's programmes analysed during the period include EL Shorts, Lekki Wives, Dise's Secret, Closet, Tiannah's Empire, The Fattening Room, Arts Arena, Beautiful But Broke, London Oxford Street Revealed, William & Kate: A Royal Love Story, Dowry and This Thing Called Marriage. The others are Away Match, Memories of my Heart, EL Vibes, Life 101, Dowry, Moments Z, The W, W & W Show, Shuga, Kiara and Married to the Game.

Findings
Tables 1 and 2 provide summary of the programmesanalysed on Silverbird Television while Tables 3 and 4 provide summary of the programmesanalysed on EbonyLife TV on Wednesday 28th and Thursday 29th June 2017.

DATE	TIME	PROGRAMME	PRESENTERS	CONTENT
Wednesday June 28, 2017	7.00 - 7.25am	News	Victoria Pepple (F)	**News:**
				IBB's call for restructuring
				Punishment for electoral offences
				Igbos in Adamawa; Biafra agitation
				Immigration offences
				Drug abuse
				Miss Tourism 2017
	7.25 - 9.30am	Today on STV	Aghogho Oboh (M)	Newspaper review
			Victoria Pepple (F)	
			Guest speakers	**Discussion: Controversy over 2017 budgetary allocations**
			Kayode Opeifa (Public Analyst) (M)	
			Sunny Monidafe (Politician) (M)	
			Dr. Biodun Ogunyemi (ASUU President) (M)	

Time	Programme	Presenter	Description
9.30 - 10.00am	Politicscope	Kayode Ladeinde (M)	1. Moves to recall Senator Dino Melaye 2. 2017 Budget controversy 3. IBB's call for restructuring 4. Buhari's Sallah greeting in Hausa
10.00 - 10.30am	Appraisal of Buhari's government	Amadin Uyi (M)	Appraising the last two years of Buhari's presidency: War against terrorism
10.30 - 11.00am	Sports Café	Diran Adesanya (M)	Highlights of football league
11.00 - 11.30am	E-News Roundup	Charles (M)	Entertainment news
11.30 - 11.45am	Nolly Fiesta		Comedy Skit
11.45 - 12.00pm	Connect 360		Entertainment show
			Highlight of rap competition at Naija FM
12.00- 14.00pm	Music Africa		Musical clips
14.00 - 14.30pm	Documentary	Biola Ojo (F)	A short film on how parents should treat their children
14.30 - 15.00pm	Boom Town	Jacob Akinyemi Johnson (M)	Musical
15.00 - 15.30pm	EOM Business network	Olorogun Elkanah (M)	Business reports
15.30 - 16.00pm	Vibe Café	Alexis Ukpadia (F) Lerin Nichodemus (F) Victor Ottah (M)	Social etiquette
16.00 - 16.30pm	Nickelodeon		Cartoon
16.30 - 17.00pm	Nickelodeon		Cartoon
17.00 - 17.30pm	Boom Town		Musical

	17.30 - 18.00pm	In my Closet		English drama series
	18.00 - 19.00pm	MTV Base		Musical Interview with artist – Lynxx

Table 1. Summary of Silverbird TV broadcast from 7am to 7pm on Wednesday 28th June 2017.

DATE	TIME	PROGRAMME	PRESENTERS	CONTENT
Thursday June 29, 2017	7.00 - 7.25am	News	Aghogho Oboh (M)	Work resumes after Sallah
				Report Federal Executive Council (FEC) meeting
				Government approves enrolment of NYSC members into NHIS
				Meningitis - Nigeria now free from the disease – Minister
				Anti-graft agencies raid ex-VP Sambo's house
				Fashola/NASS budget face-off
				Fayose says Buhari on life support in London hospital
				Murtala Muhammed Airport roof leakage
	7.25 - 9.30am	Today on STV	Victoria Pebble (F) Aghogho Oboh (M)	Newspaper Review
			Guest speakers Edward Omaga (M) Johnson Abbaly (M) Dahunsi Fisayo (M)	**Discussion: How encouraging is the Nigerian system to the youths?**
	9.30 - 10.00am	Politicscope (Rerun)	Kayode Ladeinde (M)	1. Moves to recall Senator Dino Melaye 2. 2017 Budget controversy 3. IBB's call for restructuring 4. Buhari's Sallah greeting in Hausa
	10.00 - 10.30am		Evans Nsikak (M)	Two years of Buhari's presidency (Executive and Legislative relations)

	10.30 - 11.00am	SPORTS CAFÉ	Jide Alabi (M)	Highlights of IAAA football competition
	11.00am- 11.30am	ALMOND FINANCE	Faith Ughwode (F)	Issues around the insurance industry
	11.30am- 11.55am	Nolly fiesta		Comedy skit
	11.55am- 12.00pm	Connect 360		Highlights of Ruggedy Concert: 2017 Mainland shutdown
	12.00pm- 14.00pm	Music Africa		Music
	14.00 - 14.30pm	Family Ties		English drama series
	14.30 - 15.00pm	Boom Town		Music
	15.00 - 15.30pm	Papa Ajasco		Comical drama series
	15.30 - 16.00pm	Turtle Taido		Educative children drama series
	16.00 - 17.00pm	Nickelodeon		Cartoon
	17.00 - 17.30pm	Nnenna & Friends		Children drama series and quiz competition
	17.30 - 18.00pm	Family Heritage		English drama series
	18.00 - 19.00pm	MTV Base	Jeff (M) Denrele Edun (M) Pearl Trust (F)	Musical

Table 2. Summary of Silverbird TV broadcast from 7am to 7pm on Thursday 29th June 2017.

DATE	TIME	PROGRAMME	PRESENTERS	CONTENT
Wednesday June 28, 2017	7.00 - 8.00am	EL shorts		Movies
	8.00 - 8.30am	Lekki wives		Drama series
	8.30 - 9.00am	Lekki wives		Drama series
	9.00 - 10.00am	Dise's Secret		Movie
	10.00 - 12.00pm	Closet		Movie
	12.00 - 12.30pm	Tiannah's Empire		Reality show about a celebrity stylist and self-made serial entrepreneur, Toyin

				Lawani, who is a mother, stylist and designer and many more.
	12.30 - 13.30pm	The Fattening Room		Reality show about six young ladies from different countries on a mission to experience the popular Efik culture and tradition and who were transformed into elegant, graceful women.
	13.30 - 14.00pm	Arts Arena		Highlight of exhibition shows
	14.00 - 15.30pm	Beautiful but broke		Movie
	15.30 - 16.30pm	London's Oxford Street revealed		Observational documentary series revealing what is involved in keeping Oxford street running, following the police and paramedics in shops and on the underground.
	16.30 - 17.30pm	William & Kate: A royal love story		Documentary showing love story of Prince William and Kate Middleton
	17.30 - 18.00pm	Tiannah's Empire		Reality show
	18.00 - 18.30pm	Dowry		Drama series
	18.30 - 19.00pm	This thing called Marriage		Drama series

Table 3. Summary of EbonyLife TV broadcast from 7am to 7pm on Wednesday 28[th]June 2017.

DATE	TIME	PROGRAMME	PRESENTER	CONTENT
Thursday June 29, 2017	7.00 - 9.00am	Away Match		English Movie
	9.00 - 10.15am	Memories of my heart		Movie
	10.45 - 11.00am	EL Vibes		Music
	11.00 - 11.30am	Life 101		English drama series
	11.30 - 12.00pm	Life 101		English drama series
	12.00 - 12.30pm	Dowry		English drama series
	12.30 - 13.00pm	Dowry		English drama series
	13.00 - 13.30pm	This thing called Marriage		English drama series
	13.30 - 14.00pm	This thing called Marriage		English drama series
	14.00 - 14.30pm	Moments Z	Pelumi Shittu (F) Lisa Mache (F) Amanda Afolabi (F) **Guests** Mayowa Ojeshina (F) Tobechi Nwosu (M) Modupeola Adegboye (F)	**Studio discussion on teens and pornography**
	14.30 -15.00pm	The WW&W Show	Kwame Obasi (M)	Discussion on trending issues in the entertainment industry.
	15.00 - 15.30pm	Shuga		Drama series
	15.30 - 16.00pm	Kiara		Drama series
	16.00 - 16.30pm	Life 101		Drama series
	16.30 - 17.00pm	Life 101		Drama series
	17.00 - 18.00pm	Married to the game		Drama series
	18.00 - 19.00pm	EL shorts		Ebonylife TV short films

Table 4. Summary of EbonyLife TV broadcast from 7am to 7pm on Thursday 29th June 2017.

While most of the programmes monitored and analysed on Silverbird TV were of general nature, the television station appears masculine as most of its on air personalities were men. Cases of negative women portrayal were observed on programmes such as Music Africa and MTV Base, which ran collectively for three hours on each day. On these musical programmes, women were portrayed as objects of pleasure and as money lovers.

None of the programmes monitored on EbonyLife TV was seen to have portrayed women negatively after the various contents were analysed. The content analysis revealed deliberate effort in the television station's programming to portray the inner and physical beauty of women as seen in *The Fattening Room*; the entrepreneurial spirit of women as seen in *Tiannah's Empire* and the struggles faced by women in everyday life as see in *Lekki Wives*. The talk shows such as *Moments Z* and *The W, W & W Show* discussed issues of general nature that pertained to both young men and women without any observed negative portrayal of the womenfolk. There was also fair representation of women presenters on EbonyLife Television station.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Despite many international agreements affirming their human rights, women are still much more likely than men to be poor and illiterate. They mostly have less access to property ownership, credit, training and employment. They are far less likely than men to be politically active and far more likely to be victims of domestic violence. All these stem from female gender stereotyping created in part by their negative portrayals on television. It can be inferred from the result of this study that female leadership of television stations is capable of changing the narrative around the negative portrayal and stereotyping of the female gender. This is not about activism or promotion of equal rights, it is about portraying women in a manner that enhances their positions as worthy members of the human society and not some object of fulfilling sexual desires, as people who can be manipulated at will or weaklings as was seen on some musical clips on Silverbird Television. The negative portrayal of Nigerian women as domestic workers, witches, weaklings, wicked, talkative and the likes in Nigerian home video films, which has also crept onto the television screens, and which have been documented by other scholars, does not augur well for the Nigerian society which has been quick to stereotype its women. The findings of this study with regards to EbonyLife TV supports the assumption that female-led television stations promote contents that enhance the social status of women while avoiding contents that portray women in wrong light and prevent such content from being broadcast so as not to further harm, demean and stereotype the female gender.

This study is limited by its assessment of television broadcast contents only. The opinions of the consumers of these contents were not considered. It would have been useful to find out from the consumers of television contents if the portrayal of women on television affects their opinion of women or disposition towards the female gender. Understanding television content consumption pattern and how it affects human behaviour will also add value to a study of this nature.

Also for want of time, this study was limited to only two television stations while only twelve hour of broadcasts per day were monitored for two days. In future, the study will devote more time to studying multiple television stations in Nigeria over an extended period of time to expand its scope and enrich its findings.

In conclusion, it should be reiterated that television is a potent medium for controlling and regulating human behaviour. In performing the role of a social institution, television shapes society and heavily influences individuals. A pragmatic television leadership that confronts and addresses the negative portrayals of women on television is a sure way to redirecting the thinking pattern of society.

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