

**ENHANCING SELF-EMPLOYABILITY OF OFFICE AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
STUDENTS VIA INFOPRENEURSHIP SKILL ACQUISITION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS
IN RIVERS STATE**

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Abstract

This paper theoretically examined how the inclusion of infopreneurship studies in school curriculum could enhance tertiary institution's graduate employment especially graduates of Office and Information Management (OIM). It explored how infopreneurship studies in the curriculum could empower students with skills that enable them to be self-reliant upon graduation. The main aim was to theoretically examine how to enhance the self-employability of (OIM) graduates via infopreneurship skill acquisition in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The paper anchored on the Discovery and Opportunity Theory of Entrepreneurship developed by Schumpeter in (1999). Since Infopreneurs are also information entrepreneurs, they perform the same functions though in a different way, we believe that this theory is the most appropriate. A conceptual review method was employed, relying on existing empirical studies and recent academic literatures relevant to infopreneurship/entrepreneurship. Findings revealed that infopreneurial skills like content creation, digital marketing and being technological savvy enable employment generation. The paper concludes that the inclusion of infopreneurship studies in the course program of universities especially in Office and Information Management course content will enhance self-employability of its graduates. It therefore recommends that infopreneurship education be included in university curriculum in other to reduce unemployment and increasing social vices occasioned by graduate unemployment.

Key Words: Infopreneurship skill, Digital entrepreneurship, Self-employability

Introduction

The global job market is evolving, with employers prioritizing entrepreneurial thinking, innovation, and self-management capabilities over traditional academic qualifications Obi, (2021) in Dwivedi, Hughes, Ismagilova et al (2021). Graduates of Office and Information Management programs are expected to be versatile, possessing both administrative expertise and business acumen that can allow them to venture into self-employment. As opined by Udo, (2023) in Chux-Nyeche, et al (2025), the shift towards entrepreneurship is partly driven by the increasing scarcity of white-collar jobs in the formal sector and the demand for technologically driven skills that can be utilized in small businesses and startups. The emphasis on employability in contemporary education systems has significantly shifted towards equipping students with the skills necessary to not only meet the demands of employers but also to become creators of their employment. In this regard, self-employability status is an indicator of a student's readiness to enter the entrepreneurial world, leveraging their acquired skills to either start their own businesses or offer freelance services in their fields of expertise. We are witnesses to the growing unemployment of youths in the 21st century which has metamorphosed to increased social vices like kidnapped, yahoo, and youth restiveness. Self-employability status of graduates has become a growing concern in contemporary society, particularly in regions with high unemployment rates like Rivers State, Nigeria. Self-employability

refers to the capability of individuals to initiate, manage, and sustain their entrepreneurial ventures to secure their livelihoods. It connotes a shift from the traditional job-seeking paradigm to a more proactive approach where individuals create employment opportunities not only for themselves but for others. This is particularly relevant for students of Office and Information Management (OIM) in tertiary institutions, where the dynamic nature of the digital economy presents unique opportunities for entrepreneurial ventures. Self-employability is often seen as a crucial factor in mitigating the high rate of graduate unemployment that have plagued many developing regions, including Rivers State, Nigeria. In recent times, tertiary institutions, particularly Office and Information Management (OIM) department, are focusing on equipping students with skills that go beyond clerical and administrative duties, moving towards entrepreneurial competencies that prepare them for self-employment in today's dynamic job market (Chux-Nyeche & Nwinyokugi, 2020; Okoye & Eze, (2022) in Zameer, Babar,& Shafique (2023).

Furthermore, the gap in the effective application of infopreneurship skills is exacerbated by outdated training programs, insufficient practical exposure, and inadequate institutional support. This misalignment between educational training and industry needs results in graduates being ill-prepared for the competitive demands of the digital economy. Addressing these issues is imperative for ensuring that OIM students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State not only acquire relevant infopreneurship skills but also enhance their self-employability status, thereby contributing to their personal career development and the broader economic growth of the region. Hence, the need for this paper.

Aim and Objectives

The benefit of this paper lies in its potential to address crucial issues in education, career development, and the economic empowerment of students and graduates. As digital entrepreneurship gains prominence in today's knowledge-driven economy, infopreneurship has emerged as a viable career path for graduates who possess the necessary skills. Therefore, the general aim of this paper is to:

1. Shed light on the role of infopreneurship skill acquisition in enhancing the employability and entrepreneurial potential of Office and Information Management students and graduates.
2. To theoretically examine how to enhance the self-employability of Office and Information Management graduates via infopreneurship skill acquisition and replacing the subject Short Hand with infopreneurship studies in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.
3. To examine how the inclusion of infopreneurship skills such as Content Creation skills; Digital Marketing skills and Technology Proficiency can enhance the employability of graduates of office and information management.
4. To provide critical insights into the preparedness of tertiary institution graduates for self-employment.

Significance:

With high unemployment rates in Nigeria, it is imperative for students to develop skills that make them independent and self-reliant. Infopreneurship, which involves creating, managing, and marketing information-based products and services online, offers an avenue for students to explore self-employment options beyond traditional office jobs. This paper can guide educational institutions on how to adapt their curricula to foster digital skills and entrepreneurial thinking among students. Studies indicate that students who engage in entrepreneurial activities while in school demonstrate higher self-efficacy and adaptability in the labor market Ezeani and Ezeani, (2020) in Johnstone, (2023). For Office and Information Management (OIM) students, self-employability status could be influenced by several factors including skill acquisition in areas such as business management, information technology, communication, and infopreneurship. Rivers State, which is home to numerous tertiary institutions, faces challenges such as high unemployment rates among its youth population (Nigerian Bureau of Statistics [NBS] 2022) as contained in Chatterjee, Chaudhuri, Vrontis

and Giovando (2023). More so, Eze and Nwogu, (2023) as cited in Johnstone, (2023) agrees to this assertion that this has made it imperative for OIM students to acquire skills that go beyond clerical work, expanding their competence to start their own ventures or engage in freelance work within the digital economy

The concept of employability has traditionally been understood in the context of employability skills, which are typically viewed as the skills required for gaining and maintaining a job. However, employability skills alone may not be sufficient in today's labor market, where creating jobs through entrepreneurship is becoming more viable. Self-employability, therefore, encompasses the ability to leverage acquired skills to create opportunities, manage businesses, and sustain economic independence (Ogundele et al., 2022) in Ahmad, Noor, & Rahim, (2022). More so, self-employability is closely related to the concept of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in entrepreneurial activities. Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy Zameer, Babar and Shafique (2023) suggests that students who perceive themselves as capable of managing their own businesses are more likely to take the leap into self-employment. Therefore, fostering entrepreneurial mindsets among OIM students is crucial for improving their self-employability status. In the light of the above enhancing self-employability of office and information management students via infopreneurship skill acquisition in tertiary institutions in Rivers State has become a necessity for the enhancement of graduate employment.

Concept of Infopreneurship

Infopreneurship is a combination of "information" and "entrepreneurship, (Kagermann et al., 2020) in Chatterjee, Rana, Tamilmani, and Sharma, (2021) maintained that it is the practice of collecting, packaging, and selling information as a product. In the digital age, infopreneurship has emerged as a powerful tool for generating income, especially among young people and students. Infopreneurs leverage digital platforms, social media, and various online tools to provide information products such as e-Books, online courses, consultancy, and webinars. As observed by Oyedele and Babajide, (2021), cited in Schaufeli and Bakker, (2023) the demand for information products has skyrocketed in recent years, with consumers increasingly seeking knowledge in specialized fields, making infopreneurship a viable career path for graduates from various disciplines, including office and information management.

Infopreneurship skill acquisition is crucial for OIM students, as it provides them with the ability to turn their knowledge into marketable information products. Chukwu, (2021) in Chux-Nyeche et al (2025) agrees that these skills include content creation, digital marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), and effective communication. Tertiary institutions in Rivers State must prioritize these skills to equip students to thrive in the increasingly competitive job market. The role of infopreneurship in self-employability cannot be overstated. Students who acquire skills in this domain can easily become self-employed by providing information services to a wide range of clients across different industries. The global demand for knowledge-based services is growing, and infopreneurs can tap into this trend by offering niche expertise in various areas such as business consultancy, health, education, and technology (Chux-Nyeche & Nwinyokugi, 2020). The good thing about infopreneurship is that it does not require mortar and brick store or huge capital to start a business.

In the context of Office and Information Management, infopreneurship is highly relevant. OIM students are trained to manage information, organize office activities, and facilitate communication processes within an organization. By acquiring infopreneurial skills, these students can extend their abilities beyond the traditional office environment, tapping into digital entrepreneurship. This involves creating online businesses that capitalize on the global shift towards digitalization, especially in the context of remote work and digital services Adeoye, (2022) in Kasneci, Sessler and Kühn (2023)..

Several studies have highlighted the importance of skill acquisition in enhancing self-employability among students. For instance, a study by Akomolafe and Koko (2022) as contained in Bassey and Akpan, (2023) on the relationship between entrepreneurial skills and self-employment potential among university students found that students with higher levels of digital literacy and entrepreneurial skills are more likely to become self-employed after graduation. The researchers concluded that training in areas such as infopreneurship can significantly increase the likelihood of students engaging in self-employment, especially in regions with limited formal employment opportunities.

Ogungbemi, (2023) as cited in Olowu, (2024). maintained that tertiary institutions in Rivers State, such as the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, the Rivers State University, and the University of Port Harcourt etc, play a pivotal role in equipping students with the necessary skills to become self-reliant. These institutions have the potential to create a conducive learning environment where infopreneurial skills are taught as part of the curriculum. Despite this, research has shown that many students still lack the requisite skills to succeed in the rapidly changing job market. As opined by Eze, and Obikeze (2021), one of the challenges in Rivers State is that many tertiary institutions still focus on traditional educational methods that emphasize rote learning and theoretical knowledge rather than practical skill acquisition. Ogungbemi, (2023) further maintained that, as the nature of work changes, especially with the rise of digital platforms and the gig economy, tertiary institutions need to evolve to meet these demands by focusing on entrepreneurship education, particularly infopreneurship.

In light of these realities, it is essential to address the need for entrepreneurship and infopreneurship training within tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The inclusion of infopreneurship in the curriculum would empower students with skills that allow them to be self-sufficient upon graduation. This shift in focus according to (Osuala and Ojukwu, (2021) in Alabi, and Oyelade, (2022) would be beneficial, considering the economic realities of Nigeria, where the formal job market is becoming increasingly saturated, and the need for entrepreneurial initiatives is growing. Scholars have maintained that universities must align their teaching methods with the current demands of the digital economy. This includes offering courses on infopreneurship, digital marketing, and information management. The researchers argued that such programs can provide students with the necessary tools to succeed in the digital age, helping them to create jobs rather than rely on traditional employment pathways. The benefits of infopreneurship extend beyond self-employability. Students who engage in infopreneurship often develop critical skills such as problem-solving, time management, and innovation, all of which are vital for personal and professional growth Musa, (2023) in Mebom and Ukpogon, (2024).

Thus, the need to enhance the self-employability status of office and information management students through infopreneurship skill acquisition is clear. As the job market continues to evolve, it is becoming increasingly important for students to develop entrepreneurial competencies that will allow them to create opportunities for themselves. Infopreneurship provides a practical and scalable model for achieving self-employability, particularly in regions like Rivers State where traditional employment opportunities are limited. By integrating infopreneurial skills into the academic curriculum, tertiary institutions in Rivers State can better prepare their graduates for the realities of the modern job market. The self-employability status of OIM students depends largely on their ability to adapt to these changes, and the acquisition of infopreneurship skills will play a crucial role in this process (Chux-Nyeche & Nwinyokugji, 2020).

Concept of Digital Infrastructure Availability

Another measure of infopreneurship skill acquisition that is worthy of note is digital infrastructures availability. This refers to technologies that provide access to information through telecommunications. It is referring to Information Technology (IT), but focuses primarily on communication technologies. This includes the Internet facilities, wireless networks, cell phones,

personal computer, printer and other communication mediums. Ogar et al (2015) conceptualizes digital infrastructure availability as the extent to which information and communication technologies are provided and accessible for use to support the flow and processing of information in an organization, including hardware, live ware, software, data and network components. King and Awad (2016) noted that digital infrastructure availability is a measure of the digital capacity of an organization in terms of the level of technological infrastructure it has acquired for use in its operations. Esene, (2015) suggests that it is very important for organization to employ digital resources specially to employ in the discharge of duties or responsibilities as smart technologies are becoming very fundamental in every aspect of organizational life.

The level of digital infrastructure availability in an organization determines the ability of an organization to use information communication technology (ICT) in the collection, capture, process, storage, transmission and dissemination of information (Oluwatumbi & Olubunmi, 2017). Information and communication technology (ICT) refers to the application of computers and other technologies to the acquisition, organization, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information. Digital devices are not limited to hardware resources like laptops, desktop computers, flash drive, etc., it also includes wireless-transmission channels that can receive and transmit through digital or analog shortwave (Clement, 2018). The computers are used to process and store data, while telecommunications technologies provides information communication tools, which makes it possible for users to access databases and link them with other computer networks at different locations. IT and ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) are used somewhat interchangeably. In the view of Cox and Rethman (2017), ICTs is a revolution that involves the use of computers, internet and other telecommunication technology in every aspect of human endeavour. Availability of digital infrastructures in an establishment facilitates the handling and processing of information (text, images, graphs, instruction, etc.) for use, by means of electronic and communication devices such as computers, cameras, telephone as well as networks. Digital resources in the form of electronic or computerized devices, assisted by human and interactive materials that can be used for a wide range of teaching and learning as well as for administrative purposes. From these definitions, it can be deduced that digital resources encompass all devices and network systems that facilitate electronic data management, digital communication and vitality in the workplace. Digital resources are increasingly playing an important role in organizations and in society's ability to produce, access, adopt and apply information. The importance of availability of digital resources in oil companies today cannot be over-emphasized. The entire organizational delivery and administrative process depends on digital resources to thrive. This explains why virtually all international oil companies today at least have an information and communication technology centre to ensure e-administration.

In the past few decades, information and communication technologies have provided societies with a vast array of new communication capabilities. For example, people can now communicate in real-time with others in different countries using technologies such as instant messaging, voice over IP (VoIP), and video-conferencing. Social networking websites like Facebook allow users from all over the world to remain in contact and communicate on a regular basis. Modern information and communication technologies have created a global village, in which people can communicate with others across the world as if they were living next door. Therefore, provision of digital device is the provision and adoption of integrated equipment to the employees by the organization for effective performance. Organizations and firms are more concern about the performance if its employees. However, the performance of these employees is dependent on the organizational enabling environment that is the provision of social and physical equipment capable of driving or motivating the employees to action. Availability of digital infrastructures is characterized by access to free network, provision of airtime data, smart phone, laptop, computer desktop etc. Dike (2019) explained that digital device is a valuable instrument in the organizational productivity, it is a work-life balance strategy that give the employees free access to work conveniently in the comfort of

one's home. He maintained that the provision of smart phone device has enable employees to transfer file and other relevant document either to the management or the colleague. In the Tertiary Institutions' digital device such as the smart phone, laptops etc are of great concern as they are necessary tool in the procession and interaction for effective performance.

Due to the intense competition in today's corporate world, it is obvious that all companies are working to digitize. The best way to think of digital infrastructure is as the natural development of the workplace (Alter, 2017). The technology that individuals or groups of individuals utilize in the workplace today is all included in the definition of the digital workplace. As a result of their activities, education, skill development, knowledge, and even the expectations of their superiors, clients, customers, and even the general public, employees are now raising their competency levels to best fit appropriate performance. The position of office professionals has significantly changed as technology in offices throughout the world continues to advance (Butler, 2012).

Notwithstanding, the availability of digital resources within a company is a key indicator of how well-versed its staff is in using information and communication technologies. According to Bamidele's (2006), information and communication technology is a revolution that uses computers, the internet, and other telecommunications technologies in all spheres of human endeavor. Ozoji and Ofodu (2007) in Ofodu (2007), defined Information and communication technology as technology capable of handling and processing information (text, photos, graphs, instructions, etc.) for usage, using electronic and communication equipment like computers, cameras, and telephones. Information and communication technology is similarly defined by Ofodu (2007) as electronic or computerized devices that can be utilized for a variety of teaching and learning activities as well as for personal usage, helped by human and interactive materials. Information and communication technology could be summed up by these definitions as the use of various technologies for the processing, exchange, and communication of information. In order to accomplish this, modern workplaces make use of computer systems/laptops, smart phones, Wi-Fi, and other types of information-sharing and communication tools to make sure that they can handle their jobs effectively. According to Aribasala (2016), in Almadany and Albawi (2024), information and communication technology are becoming a more significant factor in how well organizations and society are able to create, access, accept, and use information. However, because of their capacity to promote the transfer and acquisition of knowledge, they are being hailed as the resources or tools for the post-industrial age and the cornerstones of a knowledge economy in order to emphasize the value of information and communication technology use in the workplace, Aribasala (2016). The idea of digital infrastructure is defined differently by different authors. The most modern equipment offered by an organization for simple task execution is referred to as digital infrastructure in the condensed Oxford English dictionary, which is published in London, United Kingdom. According to Boampong (2016), the use of workplace digital resources refers to the provision of digital equipment that entails the use of integrated systems to automate workplace facilities in an organization for administrative purposes. According to Spencer (1981) in Boampong (2016) the availability of particular facilities to replace human labor with that carried out by machines or systems created to carry out a specified combination of action automatically or frequently in a workplace constitutes digital infrastructure. Digital office equipment allows secretaries a distinct professional path and a prominent position in the organizational hierarchy (Aromolaran, 2013). Operationally, digital infrastructure availability refers to the readiness and accessibility of the technological components and systems that support digital operations, services, and connectivity. It encompasses the reliability and functionality of various digital assets, such as hardware, software, networks, and data centers, to ensure they are accessible and operational when needed. Digital infrastructure availability is a critical aspect of modern business operations and the functioning of digital services.

The digital work environment placed increased emphasis on completing more tasks in less time and more quickly in order to meet organizational goals. When employed effectively by the staff, these digital resources' powerful and affordable microelectronic components can raise organizational

productivity (Mark, 2017). The content of jobs has changed as a result of workplace use of digital resources. Demand for vocations requiring manual dexterity, physical strength for material handling, and traditional craftsmanship has decreased (Mark, 2017). The efforts of secretaries managing and operating those facilities or resources being employed can substantially assist in replacing the manual activities with innovations like computer-process control, cutting-edge materials handling equipment, and other advancements.

Digital infrastructure availability is particularly important in today's digital-dependent world, where businesses, governments, and individuals rely on technology for various aspects of daily life. Downtime or disruptions in digital infrastructure can lead to significant productivity losses, financial impacts, and inconvenience. This paper therefore posits that digital infrastructure availability is necessary for infopreneurship skill acquisition.

Theoretical Review

This paper is anchored on the Discovery and Opportunity Theory of Entrepreneurship developed by Schumpeter in (1999) since infopreneurship emanated from entrepreneurship. According to Bula (2012) in Chux-Nyeche (2019), Schumpeter looks at entrepreneurship as innovation and not imitation. Same is infopreneurship. He maintained that the basic assumptions of Schumpeter's discovery and opportunity theory are:

- An entrepreneur as an innovator is an economic and social leader who does not care much about economic profits but his singular joy is being an innovator and a server to this society
- The second assumption is that entrepreneurs move the economy out of the static equilibrium. Entrepreneur moves the economic system out of the static equilibrium by creating new products or production methods thereby rendering others obsolete. This is the process of "creative destruction" (creating uncertainty) which Schumpeter saw as the driving force behind economic development.
- The entrepreneur is not necessarily the one who invents new combinations but the one who identifies how these new combinations can be applied in production. This line of reasoning implies that a business owner is considered an entrepreneur only if he is carrying out new combinations in practice.

Schumpeter's theory of entrepreneurship is relevant to explaining and predicting the relationship between entrepreneurship and graduate employment. The theory identifies and describes the entrepreneur as an innovative person who is capable of creating value by servicing people's information needs to make profit and solving peoples' problem in a given system and time. He sees entrepreneurship as an individual who is able to provide solutions and meet the needs of people in an information and communication technology (ICT) driven society. Thus, innovative and creative (OIM) graduates in Rivers State can be self-employed, generate regular income, productively engage and enjoy financial security by creatively creating ICT-solution businesses such as sales of information products to end-user through the internet.

Conceptual Review

In recent years, the rapid advancement of technology and the growing digital economy have reshaped traditional career pathways and created new opportunities for entrepreneurial ventures. Infopreneurship, which involves the creation and management of information-based enterprises, has emerged as a viable career option for individuals equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge. In the context of Office and Information Management (OIM) students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria, the acquisition of infopreneurship skills is increasingly viewed as a critical factor in enhancing self-employability. The increasing emphasis on infopreneurship as a viable career path necessitates a critical examination of how tertiary institutions in Rivers State prepare Office and Information Management students for self-employment. While recent studies

highlight some progress in skill acquisition and employability, significant gaps remain in the effective integration of infopreneurship training into the curriculum.

As opined by Adegboye and Ibrahim, (2022), Adeyemi et al (2022) conducted a study on digital skills and employment outcomes in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This study employed a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The quantitative component involved a structured questionnaire distributed to 300 students from various tertiary institutions in Nigeria, while the qualitative aspect involved in-depth interviews with 30 industry professionals and educators. The study found that while some students possessed theoretical knowledge of digital skills, there are noticeable lack of practical skills and entrepreneurial mindset necessary for successful self-employment. The study highlighted a significant disconnect between academic training and real-world application, with many students struggling to translate their skills into viable business opportunities. The study did not extensively explore the specific digital skills that are most critical for self-employability or the extent to which different institutions incorporate these skills into their curricula.

Another study by Obi and Nwankwo (2023) as contained in Zameer, Babar and Shafique, (2023) assessed the effectiveness of digital training programs in enhancing employability of graduates. This study used a case study approach, focusing on a selected number of tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Data was collected through surveys of 150 OIM students and follow-up interviews with 20 program coordinators and alumni. The study revealed that while digital training programs were present, their effectiveness was undermined by outdated content, inadequate resources, and limited practical exposure. Graduates often reported a lack of confidence in applying their skills in real-world scenarios; leading to lower self-employability rates. This study did not address the specific challenges faced by students in accessing or engaging with these training programs or the role of institutional support in bridging the gap between education and employability.

The efficacy of infopreneurship skill acquisition in enhancing the self-employability status of Office and Information Management (OIM) students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State is a critical concern. Despite the integration of infopreneurship concepts into academic curricula, there is a discernible disparity between the skills imparted and the employability outcomes achieved by graduates. There seem to be lack of alignment between the skills taught in Office and Information Management programs and the practical needs of infopreneurship. Educational programs often focus on traditional office management skills rather than entrepreneurial skills necessary for self-employment especially in the needs of the digital era in the 21st century. This misalignment can hinder students' ability to apply their knowledge in real-world entrepreneurial contexts. Existing programs often fail to provide hands-on experience in infopreneurship. Students need practical training in business management, digital tools, and entrepreneurial strategies to effectively transit from academic learning to self-employment. Theoretical knowledge alone is insufficient for the complexities of running a successful infopreneurial venture. Recent studies have indicated that while there is theoretical knowledge of infopreneurship, students often lack the practical skills, entrepreneurial mindset, and confidence required to successfully navigate self-employment opportunities.

Conclusion

Based on the discussions above, it is evident that infopreneurship skill acquisition enable self-employment. The efficacy of infopreneurship skill acquisition in enhancing the self-employability status of Office and Information Management (OIM) students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State is a critical concern. Students who engage in infopreneurial activities while in school demonstrate higher self-efficacy and adaptability in the labor market upon graduation.

Recommendations

Based on the insights, the following recommendations were made:

1. Infopreneurship studies should be included in the school curriculum especially that of Office and Information Management programmes.
2. University management should provide the enabling environment for the teaching of infopreneurship studies.
3. The subject Short Hand can be replaced with infopreneurship studies
4. Students should be made to engage in infopreneurial activities while in school to demonstrate higher self-efficacy and adaptability in the labor market upon graduation.

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