

## Survey on Political News Consumption of First-Time Voters

Approximately five million first time voters are eligible for the general elections on November 8. Their votes will clearly have a huge impact on the election results and Myanmar's future democracy.

Their voting behaviour is likely to be strongly influenced by how and through which media they obtain their political information. This is especially true in the times of the Covid-19 pandemic, when the importance of the media has increased. MID, supported by FNF Myanmar, interviewed 1340 young people in Myanmar, trying to shed a light on their political news consumption.

One of the most important findings is that media literacy is in great need of improvement. In a point system established by the MID, the majority achieved less than six out of a total of 15 points. No one reached the highest category.

Especially social media skills and competence should be improved - by far the most important source of news for young people. More than half of the young people read political content on social media platforms rather frequently or frequently. The main sources are often not official sites of political institutions or news sites, but unofficial sources like chats or interest groups. Only 68 percent of the respondents discussed the role of social media in school or university.

It is worrying that approximately one third said they shared content, even if they are not sure whether it is false news. For about another one third, it is not necessarily important whether news is accurate or not. Only 15 percent take advantage of information services such as fact-checking groups or websites.

When people talk about social media in Myanmar, they mostly mean Facebook. Only one percent of respondents do not use Facebook. However, the survey results also indicate that many young people have a wrong understanding of how Facebook works. For example, almost a third assume that political content in their feed has been checked by Facebook in advance.

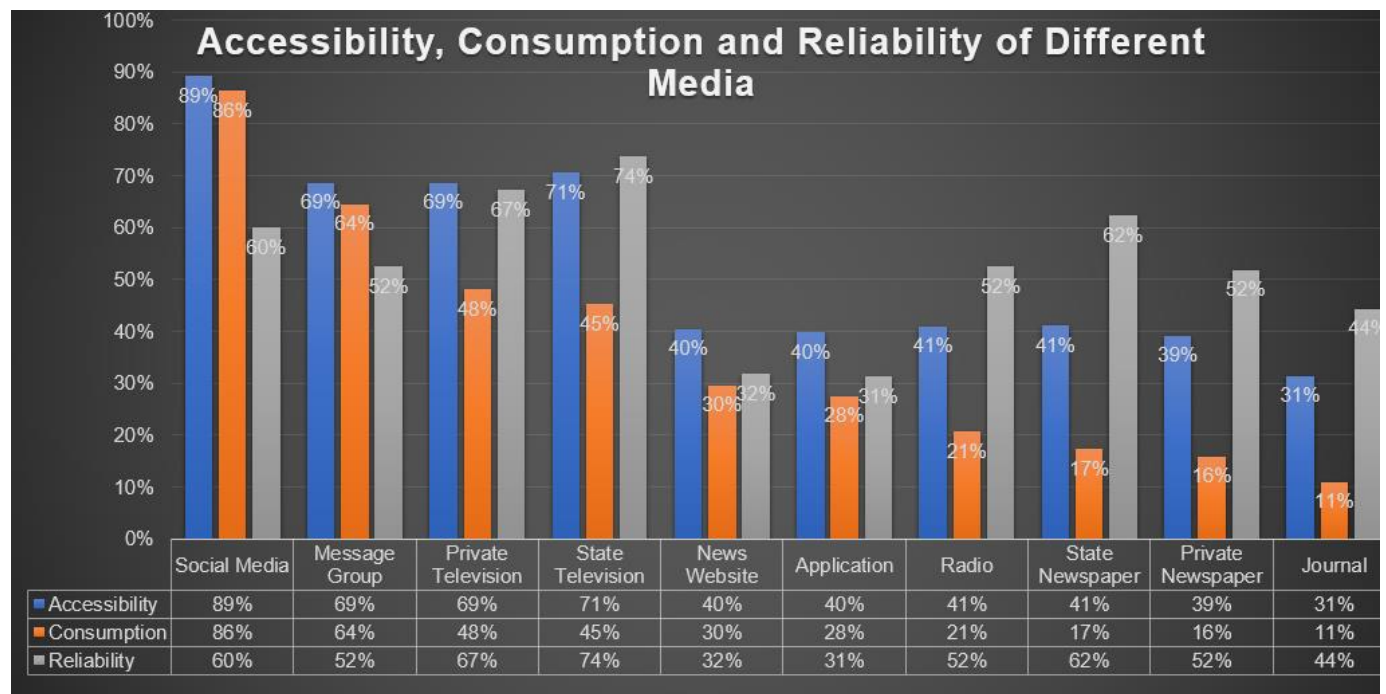
Nevertheless, the study gives reason for hope: 79 percent of all respondents plan to vote. Around 80 percent are involved in a social movement. Moreover, they certainly feel the need for political information. The study also shows that youth have great interest in quality reporting such as investigative journalism and in topics that are specifically youth oriented.

All this indicates that political education, participation and media competence can be improved easily - if parties and media make interesting offers for young people.

## Key Findings

### General Media Consumption

- The most used media among youth is Social Media. It is also rated as the most accessible media.
- State television is regarded as the most reliable media, but it is not used quite often.
- The least accessible and consumed media are journals – despite the fact that journals are seen as rather reliable.

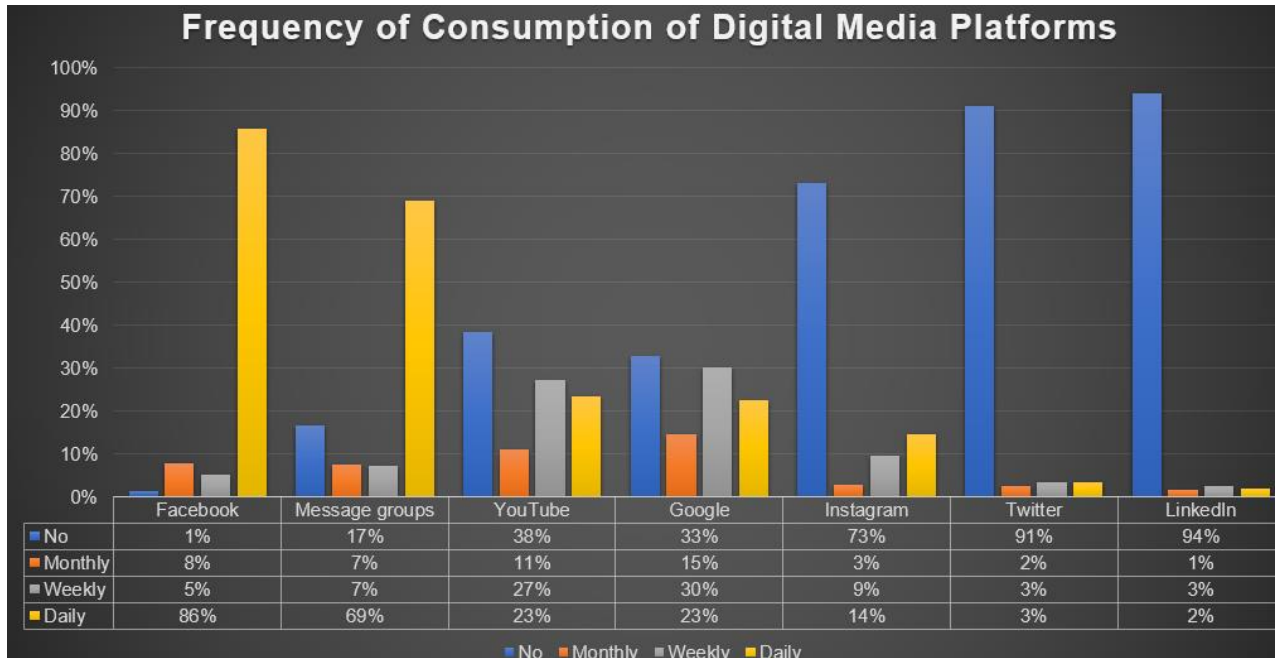


### Digital Media Consumption

- Looking at different media applications, Facebook and messenger services are the most popular ones. Only one percent of all responds say that they would not use Facebook.



- Google, which can be considered as the globally most important search engine, is only used by two thirds of the respondents. Less than one quarter use it daily.



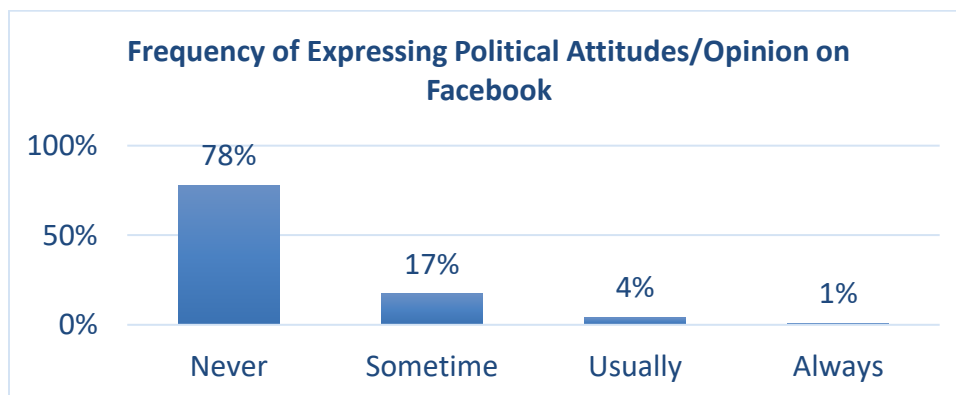
### Political News Consumption on Social Media

- More than half of respondents read political news fairly often (42 percent) or often (12 percent)
- To receive political information on social media, official pages of the government and parties are less popular than random pages and informal groups.

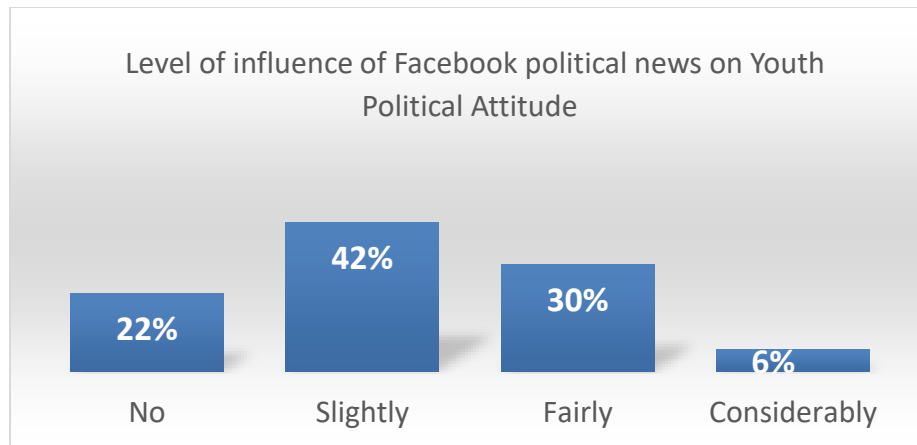


Social Media Resources	Fairly often and often used
Official Pages of government agency pages	40 %
Official Pages of official private media	39%
Official Pages of Political Parties	27%
Radom Page	48%
Message groups	48%
Interest Groups	48%
Personal user account	46%

- Facebook is mostly used only to read and consume political content. The vast majority of the young users stay silent on their own political views: 78 percent of the respondents never post their own opinion about politics on Facebook.

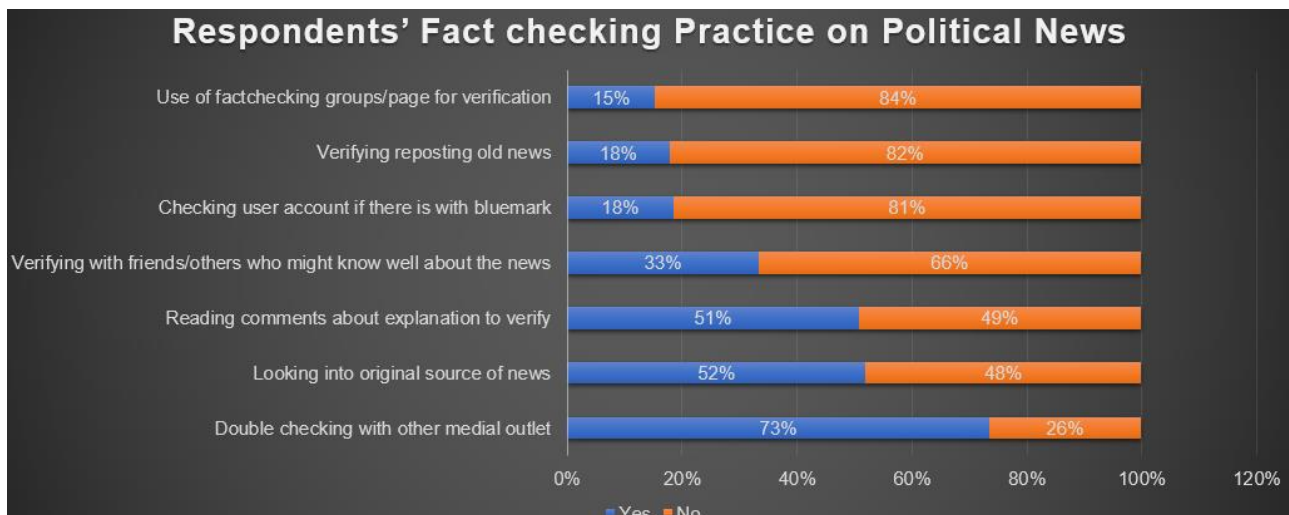


- Majority of respondents never participated neither in social media campaigns (78 percent) nor in physical campaigns (68 percent). Only 1 percent reported to have experience in both.
- The data suggests that it is difficult to mobilize youth for physical campaigning through social media campaigns.
- More than half of the respondents guess that the influence of political news on Facebook on their attitudes is only slightly or none existent.

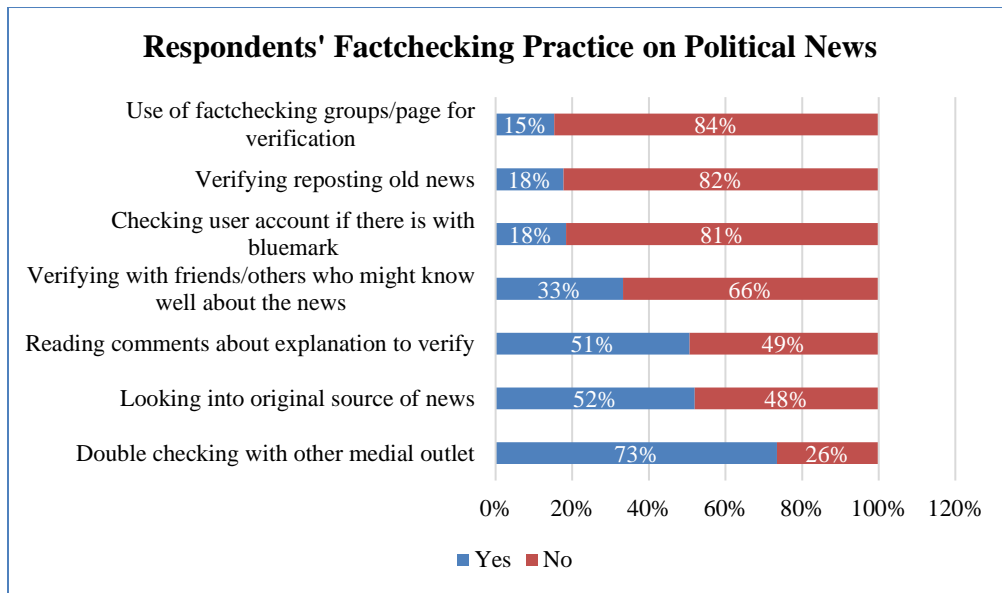


### Media Literacy Level

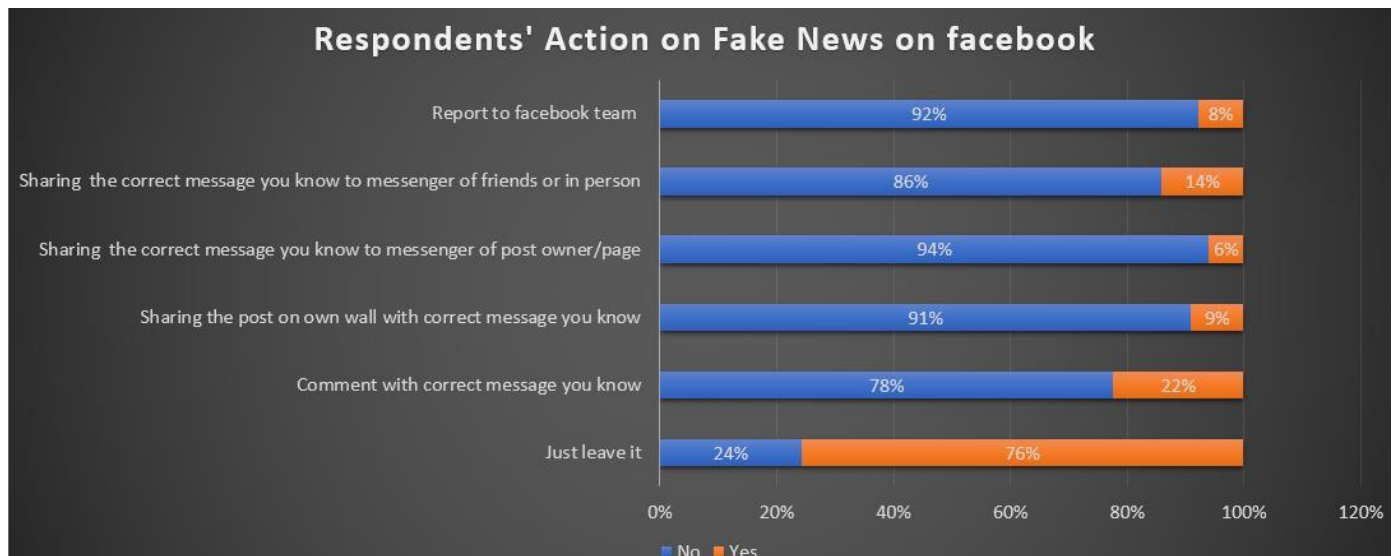
- Majority of youth (68 percent) did not discuss the role of media at school or in university.
- 28 percent said they would fact check, 72 percent do not fact check.



- Nearly one third of respondents share sometimes (28 percent) or always (3 percent) news despite being not sure if the news is false or not.
- Fact checking groups and pages are rather unpopular. Only 15 percent use such offers.



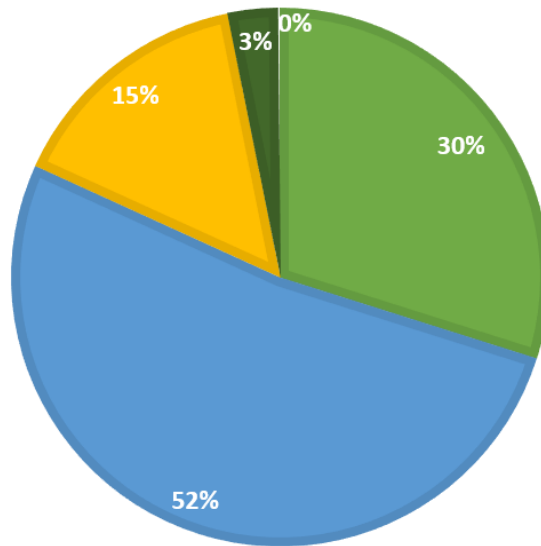
- Young users are very hesitant to comment or report false news on Facebook. Vast majority (76 percent) does not react to news that they consider as wrong.



- To identify the level of media literacy, the answers of five media literacy questions were consolidated. Answers were rated with 0-3 points. Maximum score is 15. The majority of respondents reached between 3-6 points. Second most respondents got only between 0-3 points. 15 percent reached 6-9 points. No respondent received between 12-15 points.

## MEDIA LITERACY SCORE

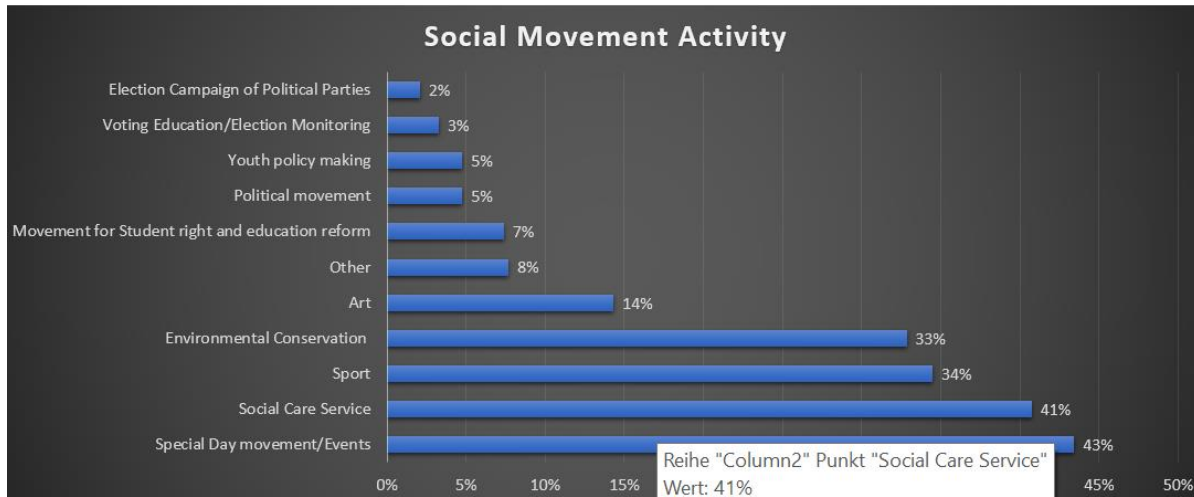
■ 0-3 ■ 3-6 ■ 6-9 ■ 9-12 ■ 12-15



- Apparently, the majority of youth does not fully understand how Facebook operates. For example, nearly two third (71 percent) assumed that political content in the feed has been fact checked by Facebook in advance.
- The level of media literacy level score does not vary significantly across the observed regions/states.

### Civic Engagement Experience

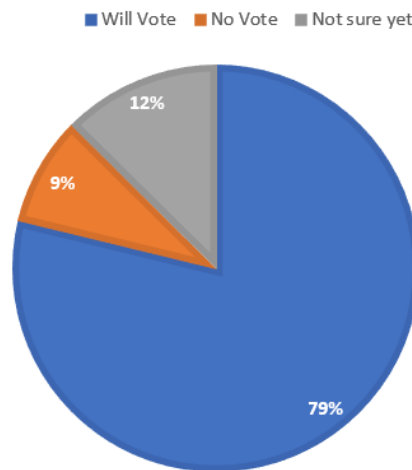
- 75 percent of youth involved in civic organizations. However, they mostly participate in social volunteer organization, youth organizations and sport association, but rarely participate in political parties and student unions.
- 80 percent of youth involve in social movement. However, youth mostly participate in social activities such special day movement/events, social care service, sport and environment conservation activities, but rarely participate in election campaign of political parties.



## Election

- For the vast majority the 2020 election is considerably (41 percent) or fairly (41 percent) important.
- Nearly 80 percent plan to vote. 9 percent will not vote. The rest is not sure yet.

### RESPONDENTS' INTENTION TO VOTE IN 2020 ELECTION



- Of those who will not vote, 26 percent have a favorite party.





## Cross-Cutting Results

- Voting intention is strongly correlated to having favorite a political party and having controlled voting checklist. Thus, youth who favorite a political party and who checked voter checklist are more likely to vote in coming the election.
- The majority of youth respondents want to vote. This means that youth are not totally disconnected with mainstream politics. Nevertheless, the number of youth who read parliament news or follow official political parties online is noticeably low. This indicates that youth are far from institutional politics.

## Recommendations

**Youth media information literacy training programmes** could help youth to understand how media shapes public opinion and develop critical skills to debunk and identify misinformation on social media. A **media literacy programme as official component of formal education** could have a broad effect.

**Youth oriented fact check groups** could specifically assess how and what sort of misinformation youth consume on Facebook and other social media platforms.

Youth led organizations should be supported to initiate **digital youth platforms**. A participatory content creation approach could make the platform more meaningful.

The research indicates that youth are not paying much interest in institutional politics. Youth participation in Myanmar's parliament is only under 10 percent. More youth in political positions could improve their representation and put their issues on the public agenda. **Political parties, the parliament and government and other stakeholders should promote the inclusion of youth.**



## Methodology

The survey interviewed 1340 youths from Malamyaing, Chaungson and Thahtone townships in Mon State, Magway; Ngaphe, Pakkokku in Magway Region and Inn Sein, Thingangyn and Thanlynn townships in Yangon. Research sites were selected based on criteria including diversity of resident population in terms of ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic background. To ensure proper representation of youth, the research used purposive sample by setting shared quota in each group (non/politically engaged, non/majority ethnic, non/majority religious and male/female). The survey included 49 questions.

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