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A Survey of Current Research on Short Videos: Postprint

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Abstract

In recent years, short videos have emerged as a mainstream content form in new media, rapidly capturing the market through their rich content, intuitive presentation, and personalized algorithmic recommendation. Platforms such as Douyin, Kuaishou, and WeChat Channels have attracted massive user bases and fostered strong user stickiness through their fragmented, visual, and convenient characteristics. According to the China Online Audio-Visual Development Research Report (2023), as of December 20...

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Review of Current Research on Short Videos

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In recent years, short videos have emerged as a mainstream content form in new media, rapidly capturing the market through their rich content, intuitive presentation, and personalized algorithmic recommendation. Platforms such as Douyin, Kuaishou, and WeChat Channels have attracted massive user bases and fostered strong user stickiness through their fragmented, visual, and convenient characteristics. According to the *China Online Audio-Visual Development Research Report (2023)*, as of December 2022, China's online audio-visual user base reached 1.04 billion, surpassing instant messaging (1.038 billion) to become the largest internet application. The *China Online Audio-Visual Development Research Report (2024)* further reveals that by December 2023, the online audio-visual user base had grown to 1.074 billion, representing 98.3% of internet users, with mobile audio-visual applications averaging over 3 hours of daily usage per capita. Short video applications demonstrated the highest user stickiness, with an average daily usage of 151 minutes per person. On August 29, 2024, the

China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) released its 54th *Statistical Report on China's Internet Development*, indicating that short videos have become a crucial application for new internet users. Among new users, entertainment and social needs most strongly drive internet adoption, with short video applications accounting for 37.3% of first-time internet applications in this demographic. By June 2024, short video users comprised 95.5% of all internet users. These figures demonstrate that daily active users, viewing duration, and the breadth and depth of user consumption continue to expand, establishing short videos as a significant force in new media applications that has attracted widespread attention from both academia and industry.

Literature Search Methodology

To comprehensively understand the current state of short video research, we conducted a search in the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database using “short video” as the keyword. As of December 17, 2024, the search yielded 53,904 results, including 32,200 journal articles, 11,300 dissertations, 838 conference papers, and 3,562 newspaper articles. This analysis focuses on academic journal articles, which totaled 32,237 entries. Publication volume has grown rapidly in 2023 and 2024, with 4,895 short video-related articles published in 2024 alone. Screening for core journals (Peking University Core Journals and CSSCI sources) reveals a rich and diverse body of research addressing short video content production, communication strategies, communication effects, service models, and marketing approaches.

1. Application of Short Videos in Various Fields

Short videos have empowered diverse sectors of social life, with scholarly attention spanning numerous industries and focusing on content, challenges, and improvement strategies. The most extensively studied domain is cultural communication. Yan Qing and He Limin argue that short videos create opportunities for culture to be “seen” through innovative content presentation, “disseminated” through novel push mechanisms, and “recognized” through creative dialogue scenarios. They also note that while short videos expand cultural production subjects and broaden dissemination scope, algorithmic logic alters content presentation sequences, constructs cultural environments and cognitive frameworks, guides narrative patterns in content production, and embeds multiple value systems heavily influenced by view traffic, thereby shaping public opinion and fostering healthy cultural ecosystems [1]. Yu Rong and Yu Jingyi conceptualize cultural communication more concretely, suggesting that short video platforms like Douyin, with their virtual community attributes, provide a “third culture” space conducive to understanding and dialogue for intangible cultural heritage (ICH) dissemination. Their analysis of ICH short videos on Douyin reveals that individual accounts remain the primary force in ICH dissemination; provinces rich in ICH resources still face challenges in communication power and influence; popular ICH short videos typically feature themes

closely connected to daily life that easily break cultural prejudices; short videos narrative-ize ICH culture with characters and emotions that readily evoke empathy and resonance; and platform interaction mechanisms can fully mobilize audience participation, enabling creators to build trust and dependency with audiences. Based on these findings, they propose innovative ICH short video communication models that invite ICH inheritors, construct diversified communication subjects, enrich presentation forms to create immersive experiences, and deepen cultural connotations to ensure content revitalization [2].

Song Hang conducts a detailed study on emotional resonance in cultural short videos, using popular cultural short videos on YouTube as cases to identify primary emotional discourses. He argues that empathy serves as the core thread throughout the “going global” practice of cultural short videos and should receive greater attention, proposing strategies such as increasing experiential content, employing storytelling and multimedia narratives, and sharing values to enhance emotional connections with international audiences [3].

Cultural communication is closely intertwined with image-building and brand communication. Xi Luyang examines short videos’ role in urban image shaping, arguing that micro-narratives of urban space in short videos represent a new paradigm for urban image construction in the digital age, significantly enhancing urban visibility through: (1) personalized cognition of urban image via embodied spatial narrative perspectives; (2) demonstration of urban image’s internal texture through fragmented spatial narrative content; (3) promotion of urban image’s three-dimensionality through diverse spatial narrative discourse forms; and (4) construction of continuous symbolic urban image through fluid spatial narrative processes. He proposes pathways for urban image shaping through short videos: adhering to multi-stakeholder collaboration to co-create unified urban images; breaking through internet celebrity mindset stereotypes to form differentiated urban images; and optimizing physical space experiences to establish authentic urban images [4].

The application of short videos in book publishing has also gained increasing attention. Liu Yongchang and Yin Xinyue argue that literature and imagery share common cultural genes, and their integration in literary book short videos constitutes a tension-filled intertextual relationship. They summarize five primary modes of literary book short video content production: golden sentence display and recitation, content interpretation and book review, light knowledge popularization, live interviews and lectures, and plot design and performance. They propose strategies for literary book short videos, including vertical segmentation by theme and category for differentiated operations, enhanced interaction between authors, editors, and readers, encouraging audience participation in production and dissemination, involving various stakeholders (publishers, marketing agencies, influencers, ordinary users) in image text flow and derivation, and constructing a full-media communication matrix for literary books through internal and external platform linkages [5].

Short videos can empower all industries. Pei Qi and Lin Tongxi analyze how

“three rural” (agriculture, rural areas, and farmers) short video self-media empowers rural revitalization, proposing integration with e-commerce, rural governance, and cultural tourism [6]. Wang Xin suggests improving content value in government short videos from a soundtrack perspective, proposing that music highly aligned with theme content, conforming to youth group preferences, strengthening ideology, focusing on emotional connections, and deepening situational awareness serves as a “communicable symbol” connecting government and the public, while audiences can also participate in narrative co-creation and collective cultural memory construction by adapting classic music [7]. Lin Jie argues that science popularization short videos, as a new force in science communication, have become a key pathway for popularizing scientific knowledge, disseminating technological developments, and improving public scientific literacy through their wide reach, large audience base, and strong interactivity. She proposes improving science popularization short video communication power by establishing comprehensive monitoring and evaluation indicator systems, standardizing and guiding the entire creative process, infusing emotional elements, promoting universal science participation, and strengthening copyright protection [8].

Some scholars examine short video communication problems and improvement strategies holistically. Wu Haili identifies issues such as serious homogenization, questionable authenticity, imprecise targeting, and lack of interactivity. She proposes enhancing video quality by controlling the crucial first five seconds, creating compelling and aesthetically refined visuals, innovating themes and content, highlighting storytelling and emotion, ensuring timeliness, and creating eye-catching titles. For sustainable development, she suggests achieving precise push through clear positioning and correct platform selection, building short video communication matrices, enhancing technology for positive audience interaction, and other methods [9].

2. Marketing and Promotion Strategies

In the digital economy era, short video marketing has become an essential component of digital marketing, with applications across book publishing, mainstream media, and various industries attracting dedicated research. Wang Yonggui, Xiao Haijian, and Hong Xinru use CiteSpace analysis software to review existing video marketing research based on the “Antecedents-Decision-Outcomes” (ADO) framework and “Theory-Context-Characteristics-Methodology” (TCCM) framework, constructing an integrated research framework covering video marketing antecedents, outcomes, mechanisms, theoretical perspectives, research methods, and applicable scenarios [10].

Gan Congzheng and Fu Xiaojing identify problems in sports and health book short video marketing, including small overall scale, singular content output, and absent feedback mechanisms. They propose user segmentation by age, gender, and research interests to provide more tailored marketing content; using short video platform data analytics to obtain user viewing behavior, click rates,

and comments to better understand influencer fan preferences for improved marketing cooperation; encouraging user participation through discussions on hot social issues, actively replying to comments, and organizing voting, Q&A, and lottery activities; and building communities around short videos with professional management teams to activate and serve communities, meeting users' social needs to drive consumption [11].

Liu Chang proposes three major strategies for short video marketing in the cultural tourism industry: encouraging UGC content creation through short video collection campaigns; achieving precision marketing through big data technology to accurately target audiences, understand needs and preferences, identify potential tourists, optimize resource allocation, select optimal platforms and time slots, customize personalized marketing content, monitor effects in real-time, and flexibly adjust strategies; and multi-platform linkage and cross-industry collaboration through deep integration of Douyin, Kuaishou, Xiaohongshu, and other platforms for mutual traffic diversion, while actively seeking deep integration with film, culture, entertainment, and other industries. Joint promotion with well-known brands and popular IPs can leverage exposure and awareness while attracting cross-domain user attention and participation [12].

Li Jieting examines selling specialty agricultural products through short video + live streaming, proposing government, professional network agencies, professionals, and farmers cooperate in operations; clear content positioning with originality and differentiation; identifying selling points from planting, processing, breeding, and harvesting processes to highlight product features and advantages; and combining unique local rural culture with specialty agricultural products to endow them with cultural value, create emotional resonance through story marketing, and form cultural brand advantages [13]. These studies provide valuable recommendations for short video marketing across industries.

3. Communication Effects and Social Impacts

Like all emerging media, short videos generate both positive effects and negative social impacts when misused or poorly managed. Negative effects have attracted considerable scholarly attention. Pan Junxing, Zhao Xiaoyun, and Lü Cui argue that short video addiction can lead to negative psychological dependence, causing users to uncontrollably over-watch videos and damage their physical and mental health [14]. Li Yungeng and Huang Yuan contend that users' environmental cognition is dominated by short video algorithms, with both users and platforms disciplined by algorithmic logic [15]. Li Youdong, Wang Jianqiang, Wang Ziyang, et al. conclude through questionnaires and data analysis that excessive short video use, attention deficit, and school refusal behavior among middle school students manifest as enhanced social connections through short videos, easy distractibility, and school alienation, with the most significant combined impact being defiant behavior and difficulty engaging in sustained mental activity [16]. Lai Zexian emphasizes the importance of moderate marketing, arguing that excessive marketing content, overly prominent emotional content,

and content distortion can trigger audience aversion and resistance [17]. Li Yingyan and Shen Qiwu examine the sociocultural effects of knowledge short videos, arguing that their powerful media logic and perceptual technology shape internet knowledge dissemination rules and foster new perceptual structures and behavioral patterns among users, simultaneously intensifying pursuits of quick knowledge and knowledge entertainment while causing impacts on knowledge authority systems, shallow thinking, and exacerbated “knowledge gaps” [18].

Scholars have also noted tendencies toward pan-entertainment and vulgarization. Jiang Jianguo argues that vulgar entertainment-oriented short videos lead to an increasingly “aesthetic appreciation of ugliness” [19]. Wei Pengcheng contends that pan-entertainment in short videos may erode people’s ideals and beliefs and diminish educational effectiveness [20]. Zhao Changli and Du Bangyun, after analyzing various negative impacts of short videos on people’s spiritual world—including information cocoons narrowing spiritual needs, hedonism distorting spiritual production, capital logic dominating spiritual product distribution, individualism alienating spiritual communication, and consumerism inhibiting spiritual consumption—propose countermeasures such as strengthening algorithmic transparency, enriching high-level spiritual content, breaking fixed patterns in spiritual production, stimulating universal creative vitality, allowing humanistic logic to transcend capital logic in short video creation, building community interaction mechanisms to eliminate alienation in spiritual communication, and shaping sustainable spiritual consumption concepts to guard against consumerism traps [21].

Nevertheless, positive effects and beneficial social impacts remain mainstream. Zhang Yanfeng and Gao Jingchao obtain empirical data through semi-structured interviews on how health science short videos alleviate user health anxiety, proposing that short video platforms should strengthen content review and supervision, collaborate with professional teams to ensure scientific authority, improve comprehensibility, establish unified standards for health science communication, and further enhance short video science quality [22].

4. Problems and Governance

While short videos have created new development opportunities across industries and transformed audience news and information consumption, this emerging field has also generated numerous problems, with relevant laws and regulations still imperfect and governance systems continuously being optimized. Wu Bulin, Yin Jianqiang, and Jiao Jian propose three principles for governing short video chaos: multi-stakeholder collaborative governance, adherence to tech-for-good concepts, and commitment to collaborative co-governance. They propose comprehensive governance pathways including: improving top-level design and institutional norms; enacting specialized laws and regulations; clarifying government-enterprise boundaries and delineating responsibilities; establishing detailed platform content classification management rules and case guidance systems; creating differentiated enterprise supervision mechanisms and respon-

sibility assessment systems; strictly implementing chief editor systems; strengthening full-process content production control; enhancing qualification review of contracted anchors; accelerating unified technical standards for video content security; driving content governance upgrades through technological innovation; accelerating algorithmic ethics norms in short video fields; balancing control and development to ensure fair competition and protect user rights; reducing burdens on enterprises and avoiding “one-size-fits-all” approaches; establishing cross-platform credit evaluation systems for credit-based classified supervision; smoothing channels for universal co-governance to maximize social mobilization; optimizing reporting and complaint channels; establishing rapid response and tracking feedback mechanisms for key complaints; strengthening industry self-discipline; urging platforms to improve creator management mechanisms; and intensifying education and guidance for short video creators to promote mainstream values and positive energy [23].

Li Junwen argues that algorithmic recommendation in short video news suppresses user needs, restricts user agency, creates “addictive” phenomena, and places audiences in information cocoons that prevent comprehensive, objective information access, forming anxiety-inducing “algorithmic 绑架 (kidnapping).” He proposes solutions including: legislating to limit and regulate short video platform algorithms; strengthening government supervision over algorithmic recommendation logic with accountability mechanisms to guide quality content promotion and enable platforms to fulfill public media social functions; establishing algorithmic transparency principles; creating platform “self-governance” mechanisms where algorithms don’t merely cater to user interests and traffic but incorporate mainstream values as internal logic; and implementing “algorithmic recommendation + user choice” models that enhance user 选择权 (choice rights) in algorithmic recommendation with refined options to allow users to limit algorithmic control [24].

Copyright infringement issues in short video creation have become increasingly prominent, particularly disputes between secondary creation short video creators and film/television variety show rights holders. Wei Yuanshan argues that the current copyright law’s “license first, use later” model mismatches with secondary creation short videos’ UGC model, causing frequent disputes. Exorbitant licensing fees for film/television variety shows also prevent secondary creators with insufficient bargaining power from obtaining licenses. Wei proposes a platform-based collective licensing model where short video platforms represent secondary creators in obtaining licenses from long-video rights holders, ensuring rights holders’ fee income while introducing more long-video copyrighted content for secondary creators, thereby avoiding or reducing infringement disputes and promoting win-win development across long and short video industries [25].

5. Development Paths for Mainstream Media

Given short videos’ important status in new media applications, they have become a crucial integration point for mainstream media. Short video accounts

on major platforms have become vital channels for enhancing mainstream media's public opinion guidance, communication power, and influence. In holistic studies, Cao Suzhen and Liu Jing argue that mainstream media news short videos should follow communication laws, adapt to platform-based information operation models, emphasize "lightweight," "lifestyle," "interesting," "relevant," and "novel" characteristics; shift from grand narratives and concept elaboration to micro-narratives and interactive narratives; reshape communication concepts with platform, technology, product, and social thinking to seek maximum common ground between communicators and audiences; and explore new paradigms for empathy communication with "fact + emotion" as the core, supplemented by emotional and opinion-based narrative discourse [26].

Research also addresses short video development at various mainstream media levels. Wan Lipeng, Xie Mengqi, and Xu Bingzhou summarize important "down-to-earth" strategies for county-level media convergence short videos: deep excavation of local culture and rural life, approachable image and colloquial expression strategies, and innovative short video formats for efficient dissemination [27]. Zhu Hui, using *Zhongshan Daily* as a case study, identifies problems in city-level newspaper short video transformation: lack of professional talent and equipment, insufficient assessment mechanisms to support transformation, and lack of short video operation thinking. He proposes establishing correspondent video teams to widely collect materials; requiring all editorial staff to become video shooters focusing on capturing hot topics and winning with content; analyzing audience needs for better operation; and creating 爆款 (viral) products with good content [28]. Li Jiaqi, using *The Paper* as an example, proposes strategies for mainstream media on Douyin: following hot topics, combining "speed" with "depth," catering to user habits with clever use of "pinning" and "collections," building professional teams, researching platform algorithms to optimize strategies for platform rules and characteristics, avoiding information cocoons, fully utilizing interactive functions to enhance engagement and guidance, and insisting on high-quality content output to create distinctive features [29]. Li Renping, using *People's Daily* short videos as examples, summarizes characteristics of viral news short videos: diversified topic selection, mass-oriented protagonists, and clear thematic narrative structures. He proposes strategies including leveraging the aggregating effect of "PUGC models," increasing planning weight, stimulating interpersonal communication; leveraging traditional media advantages with content as king, focusing on empathy perspectives, innovating content expression; "setting direction" and "establishing tone" for public opinion guidance; using big data to improve public opinion tracking and monitoring mechanisms; optimizing processes to establish rapid response mechanisms; accurately grasping hot topics; and enriching measures to guide hot topics [30].

Beyond county, city, provincial, and central newspaper short video studies, research also covers broadcasting and journal industry practices. Zhao Li discusses how broadcasting group MCN short video business models can achieve enhancement and breakthroughs in communication technology application to stimulate industrial creativity. She analyzes intelligent technologies meeting broadcast-

ing MCN short video communication needs, including intelligent transcoding processing, intelligent delay processing, and intelligent real-time video processing. She proposes that “content + intelligence” short videos should become the main communication channel, ensuring quality control and supervision to combat poor-quality e-commerce products; establishing a complete screening mechanism for short video algorithmic recommendations; establishing comprehensive data supervision mechanisms with regular data verification and auditing to strengthen data supervision; establishing professional talent teams to provide production, marketing, and service support; and developing proprietary brand products aligned with broadcasting MCN characteristics and well-known host personas to enhance brand value and user stickiness [31]. Chen Dang summarizes valuable experiences from CCTV Documentary Channel’s short video practices across three dimensions: content production, product dissemination, and brand building. For content production: adopt converged media thinking, seek cooperation with other documentary institutions, short video platforms, and individual creators with an open and cooperative mindset, and employ new technologies and narrative methods to meet user needs. For product dissemination: fully utilize proprietary and external short video platforms and create short video columns. For brand building: highlight brand positioning through short video documentaries and develop documentary IPs through serialization, derivative content like audio books and variety shows, and cultural creative products through image licensing [32].

Research on journal short video development paths includes studies on overall production and communication strategies. Zhu Shaoyu argues that journal short videos should clarify target audiences and positioning in content production and innovate content planning and creation methods; in communication strategy, journals should broaden diversified dissemination channels, strengthen interactive and social dissemination, and expand influence [33]. Research also addresses different journal categories. Liu Jingjing, Han Xiaoning, Zhang Xin, et al. analyze science popularization journal Douyin accounts, finding insufficient construction, limited activation rates, and significant operational and influence disparities. They propose organizing content production around journal positioning, creating specific personas to enhance interactivity, promoting content through serialized short videos for sustained influence, using friendly internet language and expressions to enhance interest, and forming new media matrices for synergistic communication effects [34]. Some scholars conduct specialized research on mainstream media short video practices in specific domains. Tang Jiayi and Wang Tongchen construct a two-level indicator system evaluating Chinese mainstream media short video international communication effectiveness based on combined “effect” and “capability” orientation. Effect dimension indicators assess influence on international audiences, including communication coverage, emotional connections, and cross-cultural understanding. Capability dimension indicators focus on media international communication management 收益 (revenue), risk management capabilities, and global media cooperation network building [35]. Li Chengchuan argues that short videos are an

important method for local mainstream media public welfare communication, which should leverage online communities and digital technology to construct new scenarios and innovate scenario-based expression. This includes building public welfare communities to deeply understand audience interests, needs, and behavioral habits for more precise content push, and integrating content creativity with technological empowerment to use short videos to build new scenarios providing panoramic, interactive, and experiential public welfare services [36].

6. Media Criticism Research

As a new medium, short videos also face scholars' judgment, reflection, and evaluation—namely, media criticism research. This field involves all aspects of the short video industry chain, including analysis, critique, and reflection on short video text content, communication subjects, methods, effects, institutional mechanisms, and culture. Some critiques focus on communication subjects. Tan Cong argues that knowledge bloggers on short video platforms exhibit symptoms of excessive physical presence, where bloggers shift from narration to performance, “what they wear becomes more important than what they say,” causing knowledge to become mere accompaniment to physical performance and unclear positioning leading to repeated absence of viewpoints [37].

Some critiques offer dialectical thinking on algorithmic environmental impacts. Wang Yanan, Song Haokai, Xu Duo, and Li Ziqi categorize short video producers' innovation behaviors as exploratory “aura innovation” and exploitative “imitation innovation.” Through empirical analysis of 449 content producers, they construct a theoretical mechanism of how perceived algorithmic control influences innovation behavior selection. Results show that higher perceived algorithmic control intensity leads producers to prefer exploitative innovation. In algorithmic environments, social capital between producers and consumers enhances trust, reduces innovation pressure and cognitive costs, and increases the probability of choosing exploratory innovation. Larger income share from creation strengthens the negative impact of algorithmic control on exploratory innovation and the positive impact on exploitative innovation. “Organized” short video producers employed by MCN institutions are more likely to choose exploitative innovation under algorithmic guidance to meet efficient production demands. This study provides an empirical foundation for understanding short video producers' innovation behaviors under algorithmic control and theoretical implications for building differentiated content production competitiveness in the AIGC era [38].

Some critiques reflect on short video value and aesthetics. Chai Dongdong and Cheng Wentao argue that short video production and dissemination represent a process of material dispersion, which has positive aspects but can also easily slide toward media spectacle and sensory carnival logic, triggering aesthetic nihilism. They argue that short video value repositioning requires constructing a cultural production paradigm as aesthetic objects, supplementing with aesthetic attributes and value aesthetics, while focusing on guiding creators to

establish authentic aesthetic positions, enhancing platforms' aesthetic operation awareness, and building a people's cultural practice aesthetic fashion in short videos [39]. Yan Qing and Ji Shaohua use textual analysis to dissect typical new media events related to short video platforms and their video texts, pointing out short videos' amplification, distortion, and deformation of real events and people—namely, “media spectacles”—and artificially manipulated events created by platforms or creators—namely, “pseudo-events”—forming a reality beyond truth and falsehood. They identify false personas, events, or products caused by commercial motivations and media technologies [40]. Du Zhongfeng and Zhao Jun, using random sampling, selected 15 female self-presentation short videos with over 30 comments from each of the top 10 short video apps in 2022 to examine personality relationships in virtual fields. They identify imbalances in personality structure in short video fields: conscious display exceeds unconscious display; the degree of id expression positively correlates with body symbol display scale; the desire for sensual pleasure constitutes the main wish of commenting subjects; spectators form the main group in short video communication; and the superego—the most moral part of personality—is absent. They argue that “self-display” profit-driven motives, “de-responsibilized” online identities, collective loss in online carnival, and algorithmic recommendation “amplification effects” cause abnormal reconstruction of normal personality structures in virtual short video fields [41].

Conclusion

Analysis of the current state of short video research reveals it has become a hot topic among domestic scholars, providing important reference value for advancing short video empowerment across social fields. However, problems exist: research content shows many repetitive views with insufficient innovative perspectives and theories; research methods are dominated by case studies with few empirical studies; and qualitative research outweighs quantitative research. The emergence of short videos has created new opportunities for all industries. How to maximize the role and benefits of short video channels, platforms, and technologies while minimizing negative impacts is an urgent research topic requiring in-depth investigation across multiple disciplines, new research perspectives, and directions to drive innovation and development in short video practice and research.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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