ENHANCING AESTHETICS IN SITTING ROOMS THROUGH INFORMATION DISSEMINATION: A SURVEY OF HOUSES IN MINNA, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper examined how aesthetics in sitting rooms could be provided through information dissemination in Minna metropolis, Nigeria. The research design used for the study is survey. Self-constructed questionnaire instrument tagged "aesthetics in sitting room" was used to collect data from 123 respondents who were randomly selected from five urban areas in Minna. The data were analysed using simple descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages. Findings of the research revealed that majority of the respondents 98(79.68%) never used information services in providing aesthetics in their sitting rooms and that the aesthetic materials in the sitting rooms of the majority of the respondents 110(89.43%) lacked colour compatibility. It is recommended that owners of building in Minna should employ the services of highly professional interior decorators in providing aesthetics in their sitting rooms. Moreover, they should avail themselves of a plethora of information sources, services of information professionals and town planners in providing aesthetics in their sitting rooms amongst other things.

Keywords: Aesthetics, Sitting rooms, Information dissemination, Minna.

Introduction

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy associated with art and beauty. It is also associated with mood, emotion and feeling (Zhang, 2009). It is the perception and affective / emotional connection that makes aesthetic concerns much more important. Aesthetics essentially acts as the bridge between a product and the user's emotion and feeling. It is concerned with how individuals perceive objects or make judgments based upon information received with the five human sensory inputs (Anderson, 2009). It is the branch of philosophy dealing with such notions as the beautiful, the ugly, the sublime, the comic. Aesthetics education is the way of regaining touch with the process of learning something new, of being introduced to a medium never known in a particular way before. It is the incorporation of the arts across the curriculum in a way that fosters a heightened awareness of and appreciation for all that touches our lives.

Aesthetics has been described as a concern for beauty and understanding of beautiful things (Oxford Advance Learner Dictionary, 2006) Man - a social being, naturally loves and appreciates beauty. He loves fascinating colour; fine car; beautiful and inviting environment; specially decorated houses; beautiful and befitting dresses; beautiful women and handsome

men; beautiful children; tactically decorated sitting rooms etcetera. For man to live in a beautiful house and an aesthetic laden sitting room he needs to make a choice. Making a choice would tantamount to carefully selecting some materials (that suit his taste and his class in the society) and jettisoning others out of a plethora of materials before him. To make the right, happy, intelligent, wise and profitable choice on the decoration of his sitting room, man needs correct, accurate and appropriate information. It is possible for man to have the material and monetary wherewithal and still make a choice that he would not be happy with. There is, therefore, the need for him to get accurate information services so as to select appropriately all the items that could be used in manageable quantity and quality to provide for a fine, befitting, inviting, attractive and aesthetic sitting room.

Research has demonstrated that aesthetic plays an important role in shaping user responses to products. (David & Glore, 2014). There is a significant amount of research that show that design, aesthetics and usability are inexorably linked (Alsudani & Casey, 2009; Zhang, 2009; Mbipom & Harper, 2009; Lindgaurd, Fernandes, Dudet & Brown, 2006, Tractinsky, 2006). Different cultures have different ideals of beauty and these ideals change as time passes. Surely, if beauty and ugliness are real properties that could be discovered the way chemical properties are discovered, then there would be a steady convergence of opinion over time on what constitute beauty and ugliness. Generally, everyone agrees that beauty attracts and ugliness repels. In other words, an important way of judging something to be beautiful or ugly lies in human response to an object and not just the nature of the object itself.

The role of information in passing specific judgment on issues and in general decision making is enormous. It has been argued that there is no profitable business, including decoration of sitting rooms that could be done successfully without appropriate information dissemination. Information is the master key that opens the door to aesthetics of sitting rooms and in all fields of man endeavor. Information has been described as an empowerment tool for the poor (Opeke, 2000). In other words, to acquire skills for enhanced productivity (including aesthetics) in the Information Age, an individual needs accurate and up to date information. Information would help to develop the human capacity and ingenuity needed for aesthetics in sitting rooms. Igbeka (2000), Popoola (2002), and Hawkins (2002) observed that knowledge and information have become the most important currency for productivity, competitiveness and increased wealth. Omeku (2006) identified information as a vital societal resource in the productive process. Moreover, information has been conceptualised in the digital age as a digital commodity that could be sold and which would at the same time remain with the original possessor of the information (idea). This makes information an empowerment tool (Drucker, 1999). Similarly, information has been regarded as a basic condition for economic development in the information society (Capurro and Ajorland, 2003)

Information is vital to all human endeavours including sitting room decoration. It is the key to successful strategic planning including sitting room decoration. The level of an individual productivity could be determined by the quantity and quality of information at his disposal at a given period of time. The influence of a fine, inviting, congenial and befitting environment (such as aesthetically designed and inviting sitting room) on the productivity of an individual

has been stressed variously by different authorities (Amir & Sahihzada, 2010, Akankadelwa, 2009, Kampert, 2008, Ndagana 2007, Lee, 2003, David, 1994). Paul (2002), Brill (1990), in a survey conducted discovered that improvement in the physical design of office buildings resulted in a 5 – 10 percent (%) increase in employee's productivity. Conducive work environment (including aesthetically designed sitting room) could enhance the overall well being of employees (Including inhabitants of sitting rooms)which invariably could be translated to high productivity in the economic sphere (Akinyele, 2007). It has also been argued that aesthetic experience takes place in a safe environment (Frijda, 1989).

From the afore-stated, it is obvious that information is the fulcrum upon which all productive decisions in any field of human endeavour such as: politics, education, economics, socio-cultural, eco-tourism, technology, family, women affairs, agriculture, fashion design, decoration, living patterns etcetera rest. Proper and adequate accumulation and utilisation of information would enhance productivity. For man to decorate his sitting room appropriately and to his taste, he needs to be armed with current, accurate and up to date information. Therefore, the need to be armed with adequate information services as pre-requisite for the provision of a befitting aesthetics in sitting room could not be over emphasised.

In Western architecture, a sitting room, living room or lounge room (informal: lounge) is a room in a residential house for relaxing and socialising. Such a room is sometimes called a front room when it is near the main entrance at the front of the house. The term sitting room is sometimes used synonymously with living room; although a sitting room may also occur in a hotel or other public building. The term living room was coined in the late 18th or early 19th century. A typical living room may contain furnishings such as a sofa, chairs, occasional tables, and bookshelves, electric lamps, rugs, or other furniture. Traditionally, a living room in the United Kingdom and New Zealand has a fireplace. In a Japanese sitting room, called a washitsu, the floor is covered with tatami, sectioned mats, on which people can sit comfortably. In larger homes in the United States and Canada, the living room may be reserved for more formal and quiet entertaining, while a separate room—such as a den, family room, or recreation room is used for leisure and informal entertainment.

The living room is sometimes a rarely used room without a television or other media, where visitors are formally entertained. The portraits of the individuals living in the house, attractive posters, fine sculptures, information materials such as periodicals, aesthetically designed flowers etcetera may be conspicuously placed in the sitting room. The living room potentially operates on two important levels: it is a transactional space for the household, imbued with creating meaning and identity for those who reside therein; but also, it is the space for selective contacts with the outside world (Money, 2007).

Sitting room is normally the first place of call to any visitors in modern society. Thus, the need to make sitting room very attractive , beautiful, clean, inviting, fascinating, sane and lively as much as possible cannot be overemphasised. Sitting rooms could serve as attractive or dispelling centres to visitors. It is, therefore, imperative to make sitting rooms to be inviting as much as possible by providing some attractive sight and some modicum of comfort to the visitors to sitting rooms. The popular saying that "first impression matters most" holds here. Whatever people see, feel, touch and observe at the first visit to sitting

rooms tend to linger long in their minds. It has also been suggested that "one must dress the way he wants to be addressed". Therefore, it is necessary to decorate, beautify and put some aesthetics in our sitting rooms so that we would be addressed well.

The way visitors meet our sitting rooms will speak much about us than we could. People would rate, assess, judge, evaluate and measure our worth with the way they meet our sitting rooms. It is necessary, therefore, to decorate our sitting rooms in such a way that the right message (signal) about us is sent to the visitors through our sitting rooms. Clean, decent, attractive and beautiful physical outlook of our sitting rooms are part of the incentive packages that could be given to visitors so that they could repeat their visits to our sitting rooms (Sakir and Fajonyomi, 2007). A visitor that intends to keep the night might be forced to change his mind if the situation of the sitting room is ugly, sordid, uninviting, unattractive and dispelling. This is because the visible appearance of sitting room speaks a lot on what should be expected in the whole house. Therefore, the indispensability of a fine, beautiful, attractive and aesthetically designed sitting room to inviting and retaining visitors could not be over emphasised. Sitting room could be one of the major foci of evaluation by visitors (Ndagana, 2007).

It must be added that apart from visitors who come briefly and leave, the importance of an attractive, decent, clean, beautiful and inviting sitting room to the actual inhabitants of the house could not be over emphasised. The health and the vitality of the inhabitants of the house is a function of the sitting room, other rooms and lobby in the house including the surrounding. People who live in dirty, dusty, unhealthy and sickness-prone sitting rooms could not boast of clean bed rooms, kitchen and toilets. The sitting room epitomises and depicts the pattern of other part of the house whether they are bedrooms, kitchens, toilets etcetera. Therefore, to imprint the attitude of aesthetics in the minds of the inhabitants of the house and to ensure healthy living with its probable accompanying longevity, it is important to make our sitting rooms as clean, neat, decent, inviting and beautiful as much as possible. To imprint and impact the attitude of cleanliness and aesthetics in the minds of dwellers of various houses, there is a need for proper information and awareness campaign. Some people might love beautiful sitting rooms but might lack the necessary information. Some are financially buoyant but are deficient of the right information on: where, when, how and what to do to get adequate ingredients towards enhancing the beauty of their sitting rooms .There is, therefore, the need to ensure the provision of adequate information towards the enhancement of aesthetics in sitting rooms.

The choice of Minna for the study is purposive. First, Minna is the capital city of Niger State. It is supposed to be an image maker for all other towns in the State. Two, its proximity to Abuja is significant. Abuja is the capital and the seat of government of Nigeria. Patterns of beautiful decoration and building style that are found in Abuja should take little or no time before such patterns infiltrate Minna. Three, though there are fine and magnificent building in Minna, the researchers have personally observed some shanty buildings in Minna. Such buildings might not have good rooms talk less of sitting rooms with or without decoration.

Moreover, the development of any town, city or state is not adjudged by its economic potentials alone. Other socio-economic and socio-cultural indicators like edifice and urban decoration are also considered. In other words, complete transformation of Minna might be a mirage without transformation in building and aesthetic life style especially on sitting room decoration. Finally, the socio-economic productivity of Minna inhabitants might suffer a serious setback if the people are not made to live in clean and aesthetically superlative sitting room and environment. The study, therefore, examined the extent to which aesthetics are provided in sitting rooms in Minna and the way by which aesthetics could be strengthened and improved upon through the dissemination of accurate, current and up to date information

Statement of the Problem

Sitting rooms are usually the first place of call to visitors. They are expected to be aesthetically designed to give an attractive, fascinating, pleasant, lovely, inviting and welcome signal to the visitors and to the real inhabitants of the house. From the preliminary investigation carried out by the researchers, many buildings do not have sitting rooms talk less of providing aesthetics to such rooms. The ones that are magnificently and beautifully decorated outside appeared to lack the inner beauty and the aesthetics that match the sitting rooms of such edifices. Some sitting rooms are decorated with colours that do not blend. Some do not have adequate space, cross ventilation, attractive posters, comfortable seats, etcetera. Lack of aesthetics in such sitting rooms could have been a result of lack of appropriate information services on how, where, what constitute befitting and aesthetically designed sitting rooms. The study, therefore, investigated the extent to which aesthetics are provided in sitting rooms in Minna, and the way by which information dissemination could be used as a tool to strengthen and enhance aesthetic life style in sitting rooms.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to investigate how sitting rooms aesthetics in Minna could be enhanced through information dissemination. The specific objectives are to:

(i)   determine how information services could be used as tool to improve the aesthetics
of   sitting rooms in Minna;

(ii)   investigate if the sitting rooms are spacious with possible cross ventilation;

(iii)   ascertain the aesthetic materials (such as window blind, tiles/rugs/carpets, posters, chairs and tables, radio, television, information materials for visitors etcetera). that are present in sitting rooms;

(iv)   investigate if the materials that are used for aesthetics have proper colour compatibility; and.

(v)   ascertain if demographic factors (such as marital status, educational qualifications cum socio – economic status) affect the use of information in providing aesthetics in sitting rooms.

Research Questions

To achieve the foregoing objectives, the following research questions are asked.

(i)   To what extent could information services be used as tool to improve the aesthetics of sitting rooms in Minna?

(ii)   Are the sitting rooms spacious with possible cross ventilation?

(iii)   What aesthetic materials are present in sitting rooms?

(iv)   Do the materials used for aesthetics have proper colour compatibility?

(v)   Do demographic factors (such as marital status, educational qualifications cum socio – economic status) affect the use of information in providing aesthetics in sitting rooms?

Methodology

The research design used for the study was survey. The main instrument used for data collection was questionnaire. Thirty (30) houses were randomly selected from each of the five (5) urban housing areas in Minna, giving a total population of 150 houses. Out of the 150 copies of the questionnaire administered, 123 (81%) were successfully filled and retrieved. The data were analysed with simple statistical tools of frequency counts and percentages.

The study covered sitting rooms in Minna metropolis alone. The two local governments of Bosso and Chanchaga that are within Minna metropolis were covered by the study. The areas include: Bosso estate, Bosso Low-cost, Chanchaga, Mekunkele and Tunga Low-cost.

Results

A total of 150 copies of the questionnaire instrument were produced and administered to the respondents and 123 were filled and dully returned for analysis.

Table1: Areas where of copies the questionnaire were administered

Areas Surveyed	Questionnaire Distributed	Frequency (Returned Questionnaires from Each Area)	Percentage Frequency (%)
Bosso Estate	30	28	22.8
Bosso Low-Cost	30	26	21.1
Chanchaga	30	23	18.7
Mekunkele	30	20	16.3
Tunga Low-Cost	30	26	21.1
Total	150	123	100

From Table 1, Bosso estate had the highest respondents of 28 (22.8%) closely followed by both Bosso Low cost and Tunga Low cost with 26(21.1%) respondents each. Mekunkele had the lowest respondents.

Table 2: Use of information services in sitting room decoration

How Regular is the Use of Info. Services	Frequency	Percentage of Frequency (%)
Always	3	2.4
Often	8	6.5
Rarely	14	11.4
Never	98	79.7
Total	123	100

In Table 2, majority of the respondents (79.7%) indicated that they have never relied on information services in the decoration of their sitting rooms while only three (2.4%) respondents have always used information services in the decoration of their sitting rooms.

Table 3: Size of the sitting room

Response	Frequency	Percentage of Frequency (%)
Extra Large	12	9.8
Large	40	32.5
Medium	64	52
Small	7	5.7
Total	123	100

In Table 3, 64 (52%) respondents live in medium sized sitting room while 40 (32.5%) respondents live in large sitting room. It is most likely that majority of the respondents who live in medium sized sitting rooms do so as a result of what they could afford due to their financial strength which might also have been a direct consequence of their socio – economic status in the society.

Table 4: Ventilation provided in sitting rooms

Ventilation Provided	Frequency	Percentage of Frequency (%)
Yes	123	100
No	0	0
Total	123	100

In Table 4, all the 123 respondents indicated in the affirmative that adequate ventilation is provided in their sitting rooms. It is clear from Table 4, that all the respondents know the

importance of ventilation in dwelling places like sitting room and have made adequate provision for such.

Table 5: Conveniences provided in sitting rooms

Response	Frequency	Percentage of Frequency (%)
Yes	123	100
No	0	0
Total	123	100

In Table 5, all the 123 respondents indicated that conveniences are provided in their sitting room. All the 123 respondents are quite aware of the quagmire that sitting rooms without conveniences could give to visitors and the real inhabitants of such apartments and have therefore provided adequate conveniences in their respective sitting rooms.

Table 6: Availability of aesthetic materials in sitting rooms

Aesthetic Materials	Frequency(Available Quantity)	Percentage(%)
Window Blind	120	97.6%
Wall Painted	97	78.9%
Rugs	23	18.7%
Carpets	62	50.4%
Tiles	38	30.9%
Furniture	118	95.9%
TV & Radio Sets	115	93.5%
Posters on Wall	50	40.7%
Information Materials Like Newspapers	73	59.4%

In Table 6, there is no single sitting room where aesthetic materials in one proportion and formats like window blinds, rugs, furniture etcetera were not provided. In other words, all the sampled sitting rooms have some modicum of aesthetic materials that could provide beauty and serve as a source of attraction to visitors to such sitting rooms. However, it is still possible that the quantity and quality of the aesthetic materials provided still varied from one apartment to the other depending on the financial prowess of the owners of the sitting rooms.

Table 7: Colour compatibility (blend) of aesthetic material

Aesthetic Materials	Colour Compatibility (blend)	Percentage (%)
Window blind, rugs/tiles/carpet, Furniture & Wall Painting.	13	10.6%
Others	110	89.4

In Table 7, only 13 (10.6%) respondents indicated that there is colour compatibility in the aesthetic materials used in their sitting rooms while majority (89.4%) of the respondents were not sure of any colour compatibility in the aesthetic materials used in the decoration of their sitting room.

Table 8: Effect of marital status on the provision of aesthetics in sitting room

Marital status	Frequency	Extent of the provision of aesthetics in sitting room.
Married	85(69.1%)	High
Single	38(30.9%)	Low
Total	123(100%)	

In table 8, majority of the respondents 85(69.1%) are married people who made high provision for aesthetics materials in their sitting rooms. It is possible that they have the economic and financial wherewithal to make provision for elaborate aesthetics in their sitting rooms compared with the single respondents. Moreover, aesthetics are also provided based on some experiences in life. The married respondents are likely to have passed through some vital experience in life which they now try to showcase in the sitting rooms. Such items might include portraits of work experiences, wedding portraits, births, other anniversaries etcetera. Such portraits are usually put in sitting rooms as memorials which could enhance the beauty of the sitting rooms (Leder, Belke, Oeberst, & Augustin, 2004).

Table 9: Effect of educational qualifications on the provision of aesthetics in sitting rooms

Educational qualifications	Frequency	Extent of provision of aesthetics in sitting rooms
Primary six(6) certificate	Nil	Nil
Secondary school certificate	Nil	Nil
National Diploma	30(24.4%)	Low
National certificate in Education (NCE) and Higher National Diploma	50 (40.8%)	Moderate
First degree, Master and Ph.D	43 (34.8%)	High

In Table 9, the educational qualifications cum socio-economic status affected the provision of aesthetics in sitting rooms. The higher the level of educational qualifications, the higher

the provision of aesthetics in sitting rooms. It should be emphasised that educational qualifications come with other attendant qualities like wide exposure, self discovery, self realisation and self assessment. It is possible that the highly educated respondents have come across information materials that are germane to the provision of aesthetics in sitting rooms in the course of their study. Moreover, the highly educated folks would under normal circumstances be desirous of living in a conducive and presentable environment. They are most likely to feel that the way people meet them would go a long way to determine how such visitors would assess them. They would, therefore, be willing to put up an impressive outlook for visitors to their sitting rooms to see (Amir & Sahihzada, 2010; Akankadelwa, 2009; Kampert, 2008; Ndagana 2007; Lee, 2003; David, 1994).

On the other hand, respondents with lower educational qualifications might not have attached any serious premium to aesthetics. It is possible that everything is beautiful and satisfying to them. They are most likely to see no reason or need to search for information on how to improve the quality of their sitting rooms aesthetically. In other words, educational qualifications, academic and social exposures with the attendant's socio-economic status in the society could have direct positive influence on the provision of aesthetics in sitting rooms. This is because what is aesthetically appealing and attractive to the highly educated minds could be repelling and repulsive to the low educationally qualified people and vice-versa.

Discussion of Findings

It is obvious from the findings of the research (In Table 2) that a majority 98(79.7%) had never used information services nor employed the services of information professionals in the provision of aesthetics in their sitting rooms. Only 3 (2.4%) indicated that they have always been depending on appropriate information sources and on the services of information specialists in the decoration of their sitting rooms. Sitting room decoration is a herculean task; an assignment that requires the skill of professionals. The owners of the buildings used for the research (In Minna) would do a lot of good to themselves and to their dwelling places by availing themselves of all the plethora of information services on sitting room decoration. The services of highly professional interior decorators (designers) could not be undermined if appropriate aesthetics is to be provided in sitting rooms. Information and appropriate information services are the essential ingredients for securing genuine interior decorators that would render appropriate professional decoration services as opposed to quakes.

From Table 3, more than halve 64 (52%), of the respondents indicated that their sitting rooms are of medium size while 40 (32.5%) respondents affirmed that their sitting rooms are large enough, only 12 (9.8%) respondents indicated that their sitting rooms are extra large. For good and healthy living, sitting rooms that are extra-large, with all possible cross-ventilation and other conveniences, are preferable. Sitting rooms where people are choked up and packed together might be vulnerable to all forms of health hazards. Easily communicable and transmitted diseases like asthma, cough, measles, and bronchitis etcetera could be the aftermath. In other words, sitting rooms are not to be physically aesthetically sound alone but also sound in terms of living conditions and associated

conveniences. The availability of aesthetic materials in sitting rooms used for the research is commendable as shown in Table 6. All the sampled sitting rooms have aesthetic materials in different and varying proportion. However, the available materials could still be improved upon.

Furthermore, the colour compatibility (colour blending) for the aesthetic materials used is abysmally poor. This is crystal clear in Table 7 in which out of the 123 respondents only 13 (10.6%) respondents used window blind, rugs, tiles, carpets, furniture and wall paint that blend. In other words, the remaining respondents 110 (89.43%) used what could be described as colour blocking for most of the aesthetic materials in their sitting rooms. The clarion call then is the urgent need for the services of highly professional interior decorators and information service providers in the provision of appropriate aesthetics in the sitting room under investigation. The role of information and information service providers in the design and decoration of sitting rooms cannot be overemphasised. This is because information is the bedrock upon which all productive decisions (including aesthetics in sitting rooms) are predicated.

It should be stated, however, that information and the services of information providers on the provision of aesthetics in sitting rooms could only be appreciated, sought for, valued and used by the people who believe that they need it. People that are contented with the present situation of their sitting rooms might not see any need in securing the services of information providers on the provision of aesthetics in their sitting rooms. Moreover, the socio-economic cum financial status of some people might have affected the extent to which they provided aesthetics in their sitting rooms. The educational qualifications with the attendant educational and academic exposure; and socio-economic cum financial status of people could have cumulative effect on the provision of aesthetics in their various sitting rooms. This is also a product of the value that they attach to information and the services of information providers in the provision of aesthetics in sitting rooms. Therefore, if information is valued it would be regarded as the bedrock upon which productive decision of aesthetic provision in sitting rooms is laid. Contrariwise, if people feel that there is no need for aesthetics or that aesthetics is not useful in their sitting rooms they might not see the need to consult the services of information providers (David & Glore, 2014; Alsudani & Casey, 2009; Zhang, 2009; Mbipom & Harper, 2009; Lindgaurd, Fernandes, Dudet & Brown, 2006, Tractinsky, 2006). The perception of people about aesthetic materials and value of information could equally affect their decision on the choice of aesthetic materials in the sitting rooms (Anderson, 2009).

Conclusion and Recommendations
The following conclusion is reached in view of the research. A very high percentage 79.7% (98) has never used information services in the decoration of their sitting rooms in the areas under study. All the sampled sitting rooms are ventilated with appropriate conveniences. However, they are not so spacious in terms of size. The aesthetic materials used for interior decoration in the areas under study are adequate. However, they could still be improved upon in terms of quality and quantity. Finally, the aesthetic materials in the majority of the sitting rooms 110 (89.4%) are not compatible in terms of colour blending.

In view of the research, it is strongly recommended that owners of houses in Minna and in other parts of Nigeria should employ the services of information professionals while embarking on the decoration of their sitting rooms. Moreover, they should also employ the services of highly professional interior decorators to pre-empt shabby and unfashionable decoration of their sitting rooms. Finally, the services of experienced town planners, health workers, Interior decorators and information professionals should be sought simultaneously in the course of raising: safe, sane and aesthetically sound buildings, sitting rooms and associated environmental conveniences.

Limitation of the Study

The present security challenges in Nigeria especially in the northern part of the country did not allow for large sample for the study. Only 150 houses out of 437 houses that were officially registered as at 2013 by the Niger State Board for Urban Development were randomly picked for the study.

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